EVERY WEEK JAN. 17, 1925

Western Story Magazine

REGISTERED U.S. PAT. OFF.

15 CENTS

BIG, CLEAN STORIES OF OUTDOOR LIFE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Electricity Needs You

I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME

Stop right here. This is YOUR opportunity! Electricity is calling you, and the Electrical Business is in for a tremendous increase. But it needs more trained men—at big pay. By my **Home Study Course in Practical** Electricity I can train you for these positions.

Earn $70 to $200 a Week

You've always had a liking for Electricity and a hankering to do electrical jobs. Now is the time to develop that talent; there's big money in it. Even if you don't know anything at all about Electricity you can quickly grasp it by my up-to-date, practical method of teaching. You will find it intensely interesting and highly profitable. I've trained and started hundreds of men in the Electrical Business, men who have made big successes. YOU CAN ALSO

Be a Big Paid ELECTRICAL EXPERT

What are you doing to prepare yourself for a real success? At the rate you are going where will you be in ten years from now? Have you the specialized training that will put you on the road to success? Have you ambition enough to **prepare** for success, and get it?

You have the ambition and I will give you the training, so **get busy.** I am offering you **success** and all that goes with it. Will you take it? I'll make you an ELECTRICAL EXPERT. I will train you as you should be trained. I will give you the benefit of my advice and 20 years of engineering experience and help you in every way to the biggest, possible success.

CHIEF ENGINEER COOKE
Chicago Engineering Works
Dept. 571, 2154 Lawrence Ave.
CHICAGO, ILL.

Dear Sir: You may send me entirely free and fully prepaid, a copy of your book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert," and particulars about your **Home Study Course in Electricity.**

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation..... .....Age.....

Valuable Book Free

My book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert," has started many a man on the way to fortune. I will send a copy, free and prepaid, to every person answering this advertisement.

Act Now!

Good intentions never get you anywhere. It is action, alone that counts. NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT.

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer

CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS

2154 LAWRENCE AVENUE
Dept. 571 Chicago, U. S. A.

FREE!

BIG ELECTRICAL OUTFIT

A fine outfit of Electrical Tools, Instruments, Materials, etc., absolutely FREE to every student. I will also send you FREE and fully prepaid —Proof Lessons to show you how easily you can learn Electricity and enter this splendid profession by my new, revised and original system of Training by Mail.

RADIO COURSE FREE

Special newly-written wireless course worth $45.00 given away **free.**

Earn Money While Learning

I give you something you can use ***now.*** Early in my ***Home Study Course*** I show you how to begin making money in Electricity, and help you get started. No need to wait until the whole course is completed. Hundreds of students have made several times the cost of their course in spare time work while learning.

The "Cooke" Trained Man is the "Big Pay" Man

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. XLIX Contents for January 17, 1925 No. 2

EIGHT STORIES IN THIS ISSUE

ONE COMPLETE NOVEL

"Sunshine" by "Sunnymoat" . . . *George Gilbert* . . . 3

TWO SERIALS

Trouble Range . . . . . *Charles Wesley Sanders* . 62
A Seven-part Story—Part Four

Mountain Made . . . . . *George Owen Baxter* . . 99
A Six-part Story—Part Six

FIVE SHORT STORIES

The Rattle in the Shack . . . *Harley P. Lathrop* . . 42
The Moccasin Trail . . . . . *J. Thompson Kescel* . . 54
Sunflower Gold . . . . . *Reginald C. Barker* . . 80
In the Sheriff's Clothes . . . *Roy W. Hinds* . . 89
Not Talk—Just Pan . . . . *Frank Richardson Pierce* . 118

THREE ARTICLES

Lost Mines . . . . . *Roderick O'Hargan* . . 126
(The Arctic Copper Deposits)
Westerners, Whence and Whither? . *Thomas R. Best* . . 128
Poisonous Snakes . . . . . *Rattlesnake Pete* . . 134

MISCELLANEOUS

Digs Up Big Block of Ice . . . 61
Old Traps 79
The Mail Trail of the North . . . 98
Two Kinds of Eagles 117
Piute Leader's Resting Place . . . 117
Talking Trees 125
Chokes Wild Cat 125
A Girl in the Aerial Service . . . 127
Porcupines Eat Much Tree Bark . . 127
Coyote Attacks Farmer 130
Large Cougar is Killed 135
More Data on Our Indian Population . . 141

DEPARTMENTS

The Round-up . . . . . *The Editor* . . . 131
The Hollow Tree . . . . . *Helen Rivers* . . . 136
Where to Go and How to Get There. *John North* . . . 139
Missing 142

Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1925, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York. Copyright, 1925, by Street & Smith Corporation, Great Britain. **All Rights Reserved.** Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this magazine either wholly or in part. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 4, 1917, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $7.50. Foreign, $8.50.

WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons thus victimized.

IMPORTANT—Authors, agents, and publishers are requested to note that this corporation does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold uncalled-for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscript is expected, postage should be inclosed.

Address all communications to the Street & Smith Corporation

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $6.00 **SINGLE COPIES, 15 CENTS**

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If You Would Like to Get a Check for

One Hundred Dollars

Fifty Dollars

Twenty-five Dollars

Read **The Popular Magazine**

the issues of January 7, or January 20

You will find in that magazine the details of a contest in which your judgment and ability will be put to the test.

THE POPULAR is the biggest and best known of all the all-fiction magazines. This contest which it conducts you will find more interesting than any cross-word puzzle. The rewards are in cash and any one who likes good stories has a chance to win.

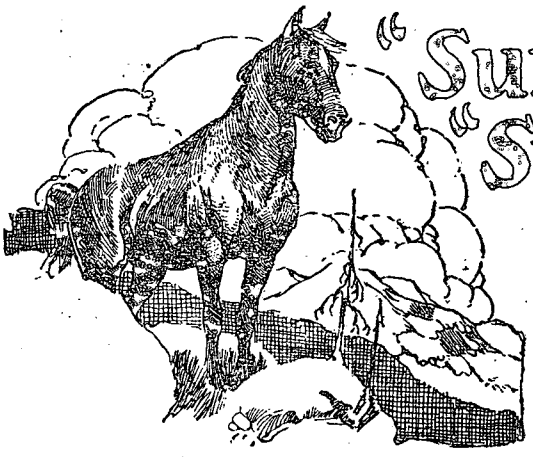
Price, 25c on all news stands

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. XLIX JANUARY 17, 1925 No. 2



"Sunshine" by "Sunnymoat"

By George Gilbert

Author of "Roped from Folly,"

CHAPTER I.

WRECKED.

HITCHED to the rear of the blind baggage express, insured for as much as nearly all the other contents of the train, the stable car of the Sunnymoat stock farms rolled its luxurious way toward the sunrise. Fresh from triumphs on the coast, the darlings of the race followers were now going East to take up the work laid out for them at Saratoga, Belle Meade, Latonia, Belmont, and other noted tracks.

Chewing contentedly at his hay, the great Sunnymoat himself, head of the great stable's stud, heard the voice of his caretaker, Sam Jackson, saddle-hued and bright-eyed.

"Findin' your hay good this mornin'?"

The great stallion whickered gently.

The roar of the train's going was a steady composite of sounds that the ear was accustomed to, so the voice and the equine reply were to be heard. It was just coming dawn outside. Presently Sam would give the big stallion with the ruddy coat and two white socks behind, his morning drink, hay, and a bit of salt and tobacco and then his rub-down, first of many ministrations due to high rank, breeding, and forthright courage.

Sam picked up the water pail and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swung it tentatively. The king of horses coaxed for his drink. Sam peeped out at the grated window and thus addressed the waiting stallion.

"If you was out in the sand hills near this yeah spot, you'd lack a lot o' water, Sunny. This country's made up of what God had left over and threw away when hell was finished."

Inside the car all was comfortable. The electric fans, the filtered water, the dustless hay and splendid grain, made it a traveling equine paradise. The horses, accustomed to ride in the car, where they had passed so many peaceful hours, stood the hurried journeys well.

Sam dallied over the water, then went to the car door and opened it. The inrush of cool, alkali-tainted desert air and dust displeased him. He inched the door almost shut. Sam wanted a smoke, and he knew better than to let the interior of the car become reeking with tobacco vapor. Yates Gregory, the stable's head trainer, would be in soon, from the Pullman ahead, that was taken along for the jockeys, trainers, and handlers and for Willis Gillian, owner of the Sunnymoat stables, who often traveled along with his horses. And if Yates Gregory found the odor of cigarette smoke in that car—zowie!

Sam lighted the cigarette and puffed a few times, sending the smoke out the door. He carefully bunted the cigarette from between thumb and forefinger and saw it sail out into the open and whip back out of view. Sam caught, over his shoulder, a glimpse of the big stallion, coaxing for his water, and his heart smote him for his negligence. He went to give the king of horses his morning sup and then——

The earth trembled! The grind of brakes, the bouncing of cars braked down to a slithering skid, the howl of the whistle, then—— A terrific shock, as the train went over on its side and stopped, dead, every bit of material in each and every car giving forth some sort of hideous noise as motion was ended. Then the hissing of steam was heard, and the leaping of flames came to add to the horror.

The train crew and the stables force together raced for the stable car to get out the frenzied horses, if possible. Their shrill calls—the most terrible of all animal sounds is that of the horse when in agony of body or spirit and in the last extremity—struck terror into hearts to which terror was a stranger ordinarily. The stable car had lurched back till it was not on its side, but with one set of wheels buried in the sand, was at an angle of about forty-five degrees. The door was open, too, partly.

As the first man approached the door he could hear Sam Jackson's moans. The door was flung open to the full, and he started to enter, but an equine thunderbolt leaped over him.

The king of horses, the great Sunnymoat, was at large!

"Get a horse free, if we can, and some one ride after him; he's worth all the rest put together." Yates Gregory yelled the order as he dashed for the car.

Ahead the train crew was fighting the fire now. With steam from the engine, conveyed in a hose, they were getting the better of it. The engine was on the tracks; the wreck had been caused by a truck on an express car jumping the track and thus jackknifing the train two cars behind the engine. The first car wrecked had started to burn. The engine and the first two cars had been jerked loose from the wreck.

They found Sam unconscious from a wound in the head. Several minor horses in the string were hurt; one would have to be destroyed.

"Whew; we got out of it lucky, if we can only catch old Sunny," Yates Gregory gave his judgment of the condition of things. "Let's get right onto his tracks; he's always a good-natured

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

horse; we may get him without much trouble. I don't think he'll run far."

Racing saddles were taken from chests and Gregory, together with Sam, who had been restored to consciousness by now, saddled a pair of likely mares, one of them known to be a favorite of the missing king of horses, and started into the desert.

But Sunnymoat had leaped from the wrecked car fear mad. He had never been in a wreck before. He had lost all semblance of love of man temporarily, all fear of anything save that prison in which he was held, while all about him were sounds and threats of death. He wanted to flee—spurn earth and air behind him and be away. The long-buried primal instincts of his mighty race, were awakened. He felt for the first time in his life a free being—a something that pulsed and grew inside him urged him on and on. Never in all his career on racing fields had he made such a run as that. And after he had made a run for one, two, three or four miles that eclipsed all his other records, although no human was there to clock it off to the split second, he kept on, his space slowed a bit, but still mile devouring.

He was no longer the king of race horses. He was now the veritable king of horses in the wilds, reverting back to nature. The alkali dust, the sun, the scent of sage, were to him like wine to a thirsty human being. They called to the depths in his great, generous nature.

Later he would pay for this terrific burst of effort, but for the time he was mad with the desire to go—go—go. The early coolness of the desert day gave way to mounting heat. Then Sunnymoat's steps lagged, yet he went on, even if slowly. The searchers did not find him that day or the next. And they lost his tracks. Wires flashed the news, and rewards were offered on all sides. Horse hunters came flocking from near-by ranch outfits.

But the king of horses had disappeared as completely as if he had taken wings, like another Pegasus, and soared from the ken of men, into the empyrean blue of the heavens of horses.

A big sand storm intervened after the first day of the hunt, and it filled all the tracks of the big horse.

Where had the king of horses gone? The French detectives have an adage when dealing with even the cleverest of male criminals: "Seach for the woman!"

CHAPTER II.

INSIDE INFORMATION.

TIP-TILTING back her head till her eyes looked straight up at a bit of sun-rosy fleece in the sky overhead, Helen McNulty forced her gum forward with her quivering tongue tip until it protruded from between her full-bowed lips. Then she pinched the bit of gum between a thumb and forefinger, drew the gum out until it was just at the breaking point of tenuousness, and then plopped it back into her mouth again. She turned her head down, chewed the cooled gum, took in the group of men and horses on the trail below, straightened up on the top of the corral bars, and waved to them, the wind whipping her little calico dress about her bare knees as she called in a voice like the thrill of a muted violin.

"I love you, Billy Keever."

"Yip! Yip! Yip!" Billy Keever shouted to her. The two other men, Keever's help, gave her the long yell. She clapped her hands and laughed. The wind slatted the thin calico—which was her best—about her knees again.

"Going after the Splendid Lady?" she demanded, as they halted their horses. Besides the horse he rode, each man had three "stringers," and four pack horses followed them.

"You know it," Billy answered her. "We're comin' up an' give our hosses a sip of drinking water."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All right; I love you, Billy Keever." and she swung down and ran toward the house.

"I wonder what she ran for; she looked scared," Keever said to Bert Lyle, one of his helpers.

"She did, that's so," Lyle agreed, and then their horses all whipped their ears down the trail. Other men were coming. The girl, on her fence-rail coign of vantage, had seen them at the lower turn of the lifting trail and had had time to go before they had arrived at a point where the first party's horses could scent them and give the warning of pointed ears first, then the warning of concerted nickerings.

"Bart Upson!" Lyle let out explosively.

"Tryin' t' cut us out again."

"That's it." Lyle agreed with his leader's judgment.

"Sure; hornin' in where he ain't wanted," Herm Dunn, the second of Keever's men, spoke softly.

The three loosened their guns and drew off to one side of the watering trough. It was to be the last good drink the horses would have for a long time. Sunset would find them far into the dry lands, of which the McNulty place was the stepping stone. They would then have to depend upon water more or less gypped, most of it altogether vile. Men and beasts had filled up to the limit on this sweet, clear water, and every canteen was full of it, too.

"I wonder if he got word that the Lady's been seen near Railroad Cut?" Billy asked.

"You never can tell; Mike, the Pap might've leaked to him, same as to us," Dunn spoke up.

"That's so; the Papago's tongue will waggle when he's a few under his belt," Lyle said.

"Well, we got as good a chance t' rope that pretty mare as he has; it's an open field, and no favors," Keever told them, as the other cavalcade rounded the lower turn and swept up to the watering place.

Bart Upson darted a keen glance at Keever as he let his horse nuzzle up to the eyes in the big trough.

"Thought I might get a start on you after the Lady," he said laughingly. His face was broad and well colored; his mustache was black and well trimmed. He was a fine-built man, dressed with the due respect for the work before him—that of horse catching. The two were rival wild-horse outfits. Clashes over minor issues in their odd trade had already created a tense feeling between them. Keever's crowd had had the best of all exchanges of "courtesies" so far. Upson, unaccustomed to being crossed, already nursed a savage hatred for the younger man, but so far had managed to conceal it behind a mask of bluff raillery and chaff. Keever had been off to the south for weeks and had not been where he would hear recent news of the upper country until he had met the redskin renegade who had given him the tip on the Lady.

"You're even with us now," Keever had to admit.

"You bet," answered the other, chuckling and putting his horse forward to make room for the extra and pack horses of his own string. Dodge Seltzer and Ace Vraine, Upson's pals, urged the extra horses and packers forward and they drank gratefully. Canteens were filled. They wheeled and started for the trail. Keever, by a sign, held his men back. The quest for the beautiful line-back bay mare that each band of horse hunters sought, was important, but Keever knew better than to put his own horses into the discard by reckless rushing for an hour's advantage at the very edge of the dry lands. The big bay mare, desert born and desert bred, was a prize worth any man's effort—one not lightly to be thrown

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away through too much eagerness at the beginning of a long chase. The race would be to the crafty, not to the swift!

Helen McNulty came running out, waving something white. She drew back upon seeing Bart Upson, who roared something at her that frightened her into bolting indoors again. It was not what the man had roared at the slip of a girl, but the way he had acted and smacked his big lips that angered Keever, who drove his horse forward to block Upson's progress. Bart drew down his black stallion till it was on its haunches and snarled out:

"What's this for?"

"You keep your tongue off that li'le gal; she's on'y a kid."

"She won't be a kid always—an' she's got t' learn——"

"She needn't learn from you, Bart Upson. She'd learn nothin' but deviltry from you."

Upson laughed evilly and tossed his head back. "All right; have it your way; I've got business to attend to, if you've got none," and he worked his horse carefully past Keever's, spoke to his men quietly, and rode off without a backward glance.

"I thought the break was comin' then, boss," Lyle said, and Keever noted that his right hand was over on the left side of his saddle horn, where his .45 was, butt to the front.

"He didn't dare," Herm Dunn said, whipping his left hand from his left hip. Each had his own method of drawing; each was fast, but Keever was known to be lightning.

"Upson would dare, in a pinch; get him right," Keever told them. "He's not a coward, but he likes to start a fight with the aidge in his favor if he can."

"Billy Keever, is he gone?" Helen called from the doorway.

"You bet, sweetness," answered Keever heartily.

"Then I'll come; dad's asleep—drunk yet from las' night. He brought this paper from the Bend an' I read all about the wreck that let that big racing hoss out into the desert. Big rewards out, lots more than you'd get for the Splendid Lady." She yelled excitedly as she sped toward them, waving the paper. The horses shied at this, but stilled at a word of command.

The girl passed the paper up to Keever and the other two worked their horses over so they could look on, on either side, where he read of the escape of the great stallion, Sunnymoat, following the wreck. He read of the stallion's mad flight into the outlands, and of the big rewards for him.

"That's why Mike, the Pap told us that story of having seen the Splendid Lady at Railroad Cut," Keever almost shouted. "The paper says this runaway stallion's been seen near Black Cañon. Scheme to draw us offside."

The others nodded agreement. Helen looked up at them admiringly.

"Bart Upson had him feed us that rubbish, so that we'd go off on that blind chase, while he got after that stallion and the big reward," Keever summed it up, and again they nodded.

"And but for the little lady here, we'd been dished out of a chance to get the big stallion," Keever reminded them. "If we win the reward, we'll give her ten per cent, eh, boys?"

"Sure—her! But not a cent to her dad," Dunn growled out.

"Don't blame dad too much, boys," Helen said. She was a good girl, having drudged for the man who had gone to the bad since his wife had died three years before, leaving him the young girl to care for as best he could.

"That's so," Bert Lyle soothed her, leaning over to stroke her auburn hair that hung in curls all about her well-poised head.

"Better luck, and maybe your dad'll do better, Helen; just keep straight and good and you'll come out all right. Does Bart Upson frighten you?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just to have him look at me does frighten me, Billy Keever," she said, her face clouding. "It ain't what he says or does, but the way he looks at me. I can feel he's bad, bad. bad."

"Whoa, now, little lady," Keever reminded her.

"Bart, he tries to get me to swear when he calls on dad, and he cusses to teach me an'——"

The three men exchanged black looks.

"Never you mind Bart Upson; if he isn't nice, jus' come t' us, little lady," Keever encouraged her. He leaned over and she kissed him with a swift, eager clasp around his sun-tanned neck. Then she was dancing away toward the house, calling back, as the wind slatted the thin calico about her knees:

"Good-by, boys; good luck; I love you, Billy Keever."

"And she's twelve years old; Upson was right about one thing; she'll not be a kid always," Keever said, as their cavalcade rounded the upper turn where Upson and his crowd had gone.

Then they disappeared into the dry lands.

CHAPTER III.

UPSON HAS SCHEMED.

SHE had the paper, didn't she?" Seltzer asked Upson, after they had ridden well up the trail. Upson laughed his satisfaction.

"Yes, and it will fool Keever. He thinks he's a wise man, but I've baited that trap pretty well. I knew that when I stuffed that paper into old McNulty's pocket in town last night, he'd lug it home and give it to Helen. She's crazy to read that continued story on the inside pages. She even begged me once to bring her a paper, but she threw it in my face when I asked a kiss for it. Darned li'le spitfire. I knew that he'd stop there, like we all do, for a fare-ye-well drink of sweet water and she'd tell him the news. Every one's talking about that stallion now."

"And every one thinks, like it says in the paper, that he went toward Black Cañon, but we know better."

"Yes; he's gone toward the Wild Horse Range, where the splendid Lady is. Be a joke if we got them both together!"

"Yes, and a good joke on Keever and his crowd. Mike, the Pap, got that word from his friend, Apache Charlie, straight, didn't he, that the stallion streaked it for the Wild Horse Range after they lost his sign in Black Cañon?"

"Yes, the news is straight. I promised the Papago and 'Pache a quarter of the reward money if we found him on their tip. Well, let them collect it, if they can, if we get it," and they laughed their pleasure over the chances of a double cross on their silent partners in trickery against Keever.

"We fooled Keever, that's all," Vraine summed it up.

They turned off where a side trace unraveled from the main weave of traffic.

So, Keever going toward Railroad Cut, and they toward the Wild Horse Range, the paths of the rivals seemed to separate for the time being.

CHAPTER IV.

KING AND QUEEN.

FLANKS heaving, body weaving to the point of exhaustion, Sunnymoat, the king of horses, stood with head down at the end of his wild burst for freedom. The sun had rolled up, merciless, terrible. The cool of dawn had gone; the heavens were as brass. The big stallion remembered his water, always given him so regularly that there had been no lack. And he remembered the oats, the well-strawed stall. Now he burned with thirst; his sides were gaunted from hunger. He had slashed through clawlike growths for hours. He had run into the maw of Black Cañon because it seemed to him a chance to be cooler. He had come to the upper end,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where the cañon bowled out and let the fierce sun smite down onto desert growths again.

No water. Nothing to eat that he, the pampered darling of the city crowds, knew the worth of. All was strange and queer.

He stood thus, all but crushed in spirit, till the sun slipped behind the rim rock. Then the great heart of him expanded. The fighting blood of generations of kingly sires pulsed anew, and his lungs felt the touch of evening chill in advance of its coming. The king of horses drew in fresh life. He lacked water, food, yes—but his heart was whole. He could face the fierce future with all the grit that had won for him on so many hard-fought fields.

Now he began to quest the bowllike valley in which the cañon ended. Suddenly he found himself face to face with another horse, ears laid back, gait a mincing prance. It was a wild stallion, whose cavvy of mares came out of a little side box into the main cañon to watch the contest.

Sunnymoat did not want battle. He had never fought another stallion. He had never had to fight another male; men had fended for him in all things, and his precious hide and limbs were worth too much to permit of his being let fight, even for a moment.

Sunnymoat looked aslant at the doughty, runty wild pony stallion that neighed and whistled and kicked at him and then kicked him sharply.

Sunnymoat felt a rage of battle rising in him then. He did not give ground. But the wild stallion cut in between him and the mares, and then rushed at them, driving them before him with quick, eager lunges. They turned and raced away, the wild stallion nipping them from behind. Sunnymoat saw them scale what seemed to be a rock wall and then whip over the summit, and the whistle of the male came back to him in mockery.

Deep in his mind the lesson sank. He ranged the bowllike valley all night and found the side box from which the wild band had emerged. In there he found water, scanty grass. The alkali dust on the grass made this distasteful to the racer, but he ate it at the last. Then he lay down on the warm soil and slept.

The dawn found him stiff, but the stiffness worked off as he nipped about for food. He went out into the main bowl of the cañon's end. He eyed that rock wall and started to climb it. It was such a road as he never had seen, but he clung to the narrow way somehow. He had lost sense of direction and practically reverted to the wild. His grain-fed muscles were stronger than were those of the grass-fed wild horses. He was in hard racing condition. He finally won over the rock rim. So, when the searchers who had heard that he had headed into Black Cañon, after leaving Railroad Cut, came, they found him gone. His tracks, plainly to be distinguished amid those of the wild-horse band because of his steel shoes, had been blotted out on that rock-wall trail, for the wild horses had been up and down it a dozen times, being alarmed by the influx of horse hunters seeking after the stallion and so, racing back and forth, in and out of their hidden fastness in the side box off the bowl of the big cañon's end.

Sunnymoat went on over the rim rocks, found a sheep trail down to lower levels, and made good time till the sun blazed down fiercely. He had found out now that he must get into the shade when the sun smote so hard, and he found a thin arch of mesquite beneath which he rested. He was thirsty, but not desperately so now. He waited till dusk, then found dew-soaked grass not bad, and so the rest on his second night of freedom from man.

Two days later the ragged-looking but powerful stallion, at the head of the caviya to which was attached the Splen-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did Lady, and which ringed their lord and master about and snorted as he whistled defiance to a newcomer, broke through the ring of mares and charged at the big, sunny-coated stallion that came toward them for companionship. Sunnymoat did not want to fight. He had not been trained in the wild fighting tactics of the stallions of the outlands. He did not know the law that by tooth and hoof shall the coquettish mares be held together. He just wanted to exchange horse talk and friendly sniffs and perhaps a nip or two with these horses. That was all.

There was one mare that saw him with growing pleasure. It was the Splendid Lady, storied equine of the Wild Horse Range. No one knew her exact parentage, but tradition had it that in that region there were yet progeny of the mighty Arab barb, Sultan Selim, that had escaped from one of Alvarado's cavalcades sent out to punish the Indians after the great Pueblo revolt.

These horses, showing their touch of Old World desert blood in a dark streak down the backbone and white stockings behind and a white flash in dark tail, were known from generation to generation as prizes worth the taking. The Splendid Lady, last of the crossed Arab breed left, so men said, was rather close-coupled, with a deep, full chest and small hocks. Her nostrils flared; her eyes were wide-placed. Her tail, flowing and big, swept the ground as she broke from the ring of mares and advanced toward the newcomer now nickering so pleadingly.

Something kingly in Sunnymoat's nature must have called to the queenly blood in her own being, for she went straight up to him and put her head over his arching neck proudly.

The wild stallion, like a flash, bounded forward, but this time Sunnymoat knew what to expect. In a long duel with this wire-limbed son of the desert, the thoroughbred might have been bested. But he spared no time in sparring. He lashed out, whirling like a flash. His twinned hoofs crashed into the sides of the desert born.

Enough of the steel caulks on Sunnymoat's shoes remained to tip the wound with agony for the desert stallion. The hoofs, close together, smashed into his side, right over the heart. The calks cut and gouged. The desert stallion staggered—fell. Sunnymoat was on him, stamping and squealing. The mares ran away, all but the queen. She remained till Sunnymoat left his foe to die and galloped off with her.

Now the mares bunched behind the two. Sunnymoat paid no attention to them, however. He had found a mate to his liking. A fierce, elemental joy of living had surged up in the game racer. He had conquered the new life and taken to himself the finest caviya on the Wild Horse Range.

The beautiful wild mare, the queen, kept close to the tail of the king of horses. Leading the caviya, they went into the depths of the Wild Horse Range.

But before the day was over, the wild mares had sensed something wrong. Their wild stallion had always led them carefully. This new leader was without fear of man, it seemed. Twice they had been frightened by too-close approach to men, and their wild leader never had done that. He had always been over-cautious. This new leader did not know where to lead to find the springs and food that were theirs by right of hard-won knowledge.

The instinctive fear of the wild things for the strange and unusual, gripped the wild mares as the new stallion led them into danger and want. Day by day mares dropped away and still he did not try to retain them by fierceness of conquest as would have done the wild stallion. Gradually they dropped from his band, till but one remained—the queen. She clung to him, for in him

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she recognized with blind instinct that superiority that her nature demanded—the superiority of blood and noble lineage.

One thing in the desert land attracted Sunnymoat—but it repelled the royal mare beside him. That was the railroad.

Sunnymoat had a mental background in which the railroad played a goodly part. He had been fed and watered on the railroads. His clouded recollection of his men-thing servants had to do with the railroad. The sound of the whistles of the locomotives, that alarmed the royal mare, did not alarm Sunnymoat. He had heard them often.

Although the mare shivered and drew back, yet the big stallion, coming to the tracks of steel, leaped over them or even went up them or down them a ways. Then she would coax him back into the deeper wastes again. A track walker would see the imprint of steel-shod hoofs and give the alarm. Then the two would disappear, because hunted with new determination.

In this way weeks passed. Sunnymoat was ragged of coat and hard of thew. He had learned the lessons of hard living in the dry-land wastes. The mare had taught him and guarded him. He had not sought another mate. He had had several battles with stallions of lesser courage, but having slain the leader of the queen's cavvy, he had little to fear from lesser males of his kind. It was not the time of year when the urge for building up a big caviya was strongest in the wild horses, so Sunnymoat kept with the queen alone. He fought off all bidders for her favor and repaid her loyalty by giving her sole attention and care.

Billy Keever and his pals saw the two several times afar by the aid of Keever's powerful glasses. The royal mare, knowing the secret passes of the deeper recesses of the difficult country she frequented, was able to keep away from pursuit that really mattered. But for the poor equipment of Sunnymoat for desert living, she would have escaped serious notice, for she was noted for craft and guile and never had been approached seriously by the horse hunters. Only Keever had been close to cornering her on one occasion, when he had come upon her suddenly in a narrow side draw and just missed a lasso cast at her because a branch of mesquite had fouled his rope as it seemed about to close about her forefeet.

Keever and his friends met other hunters after the king of horses. These let Keever and his pals know that Bart Upson was boasting of sending Keever and friends off on a false quest by a clever strategem, involving the use of a paper planted where Keever would find it—the paper giving the false information that the coveted stallion was in or near Black Cañon. Keever laughingly acknowledged that he had been fooled, along with the rest of them.

"But it didn't do Upson any good," he took care to remind the jokers. "For he doesn't seem t' have roped down onto the king either."

The king and queen, indeed, seemed to have deserted all former haunts of the bands of horses that had frequented the Wild Horse Range. The mares of the cavvy of which the queen had been a member were seen with other cavvies about the country. The track walkers no longer saw the steel-cut tracks of the stallion. By now his steel shoes would be worn down, anyway, but his tracks would be distinctive, because of his gait and the marks in the hoofs where the tag ends of iron had been.

Keever's supplies were about all used up. He had left his packers with a friendly rancher. Taking what was left, he and his pals determined upon a last desperate sally toward the Black Cañon country. Billy summed up his reasons like this:

"Every mile of likely country has been hunted for that big stallion except

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Black Cañon country. As soon as it was known he wasn't there and that the newspaper report was a fake, every one went to every other likely place and hunted. They've combed the Wild Hoss Range till it's about polished clean. Every water hole in the desert is guarded for miles and miles on all sides. Let's try it once more where no one else's looking."

"But even if we jump them. we can't chase them long," Lyle reminded Billy.

"I know, but it will be something to locate them."

"Luck may favor us and give us a chance t' rope one of them without a long chase," Herm Dunn said cheerfully.

So they slipped away between two suns and made for the Black Cañon country. Once between the high walls of that cañon they went warily, but without seeing any thing of note. They came to the bowllike end of the cañon and scouted it out carefully. It was drawing toward night.

They found tracks that made them shout for joy—the tracks of a horse who had been shod and had cast his remnants of shoes not long before, for in a soft spot of earth they found the imprints clear and plain. Keever followed the fresh sign into the side box and yelled. The other two spurred their mounts forward.

In the small box two horses stood, defiant and courageous, now that they were cornered. One they knew at once for the queen; the other was Sunnymoat, the huge stallion.

"Both! We'll be in clover now," Keever told them.

"Too good t' be true," Lyle breathed.

"Too true, yes," Herm Dunn agreed with Lyle.

As they sat there the two horses began to circle. Sunnymoat answered the nicker of the hunters' horses. The queen disdained to reply to them.

The side box was pear shaped. The hunters occupied the end like the stem. The big end was where the two horses were circling.

"We'll rope off this end and make a fence and then we can be sure of them; we can go in and rope them easily and, if we miss a lass cast, they'll be inside to try it on them again," Keever said, outlining his plan.

The queen, tired of seeing her lord and master disposed to answer these newcomers and distrusting all horses that carried men, made her decision.

It seemed that not even a goat could do it, but she charged at the rock wall, found a goat hold, began to leap and scramble—and almost before they realized it, she was on the rim rock above, calling to her royal mate to come to her. He snorted, whistled, and started, but Keever came to life then and yelled:

"If he starts to follow he may fall and break his back or laig; cut him off!"

The three trained hunting ponies dashed forward. On a level track they would have had no chance. But Sunnymoat had to get going up that awful grade along the rock wall. Keever's horse was behind as Sunnymoat started up, but he was within roping distance in time.

The long, snaky reata found its mark; Sunnymoat felt the constricting circle around his royal neck. He scrambled, but the sturdy horse of Keever drew him off balance and he had to yield. Keever managed it so that he was not thrown violently; he came down to the level in a series of struggles, and soon two other good ropes were on him.

The queen, sensing that all was at an end as between herself and her royal mate, stood for a moment on the rim rock, limned out against a red, gory sunset and neighed her defiance. Then, thing of beauty that she was, she was gone.

"Well, we lost her again, but we've got something to show for it," Lyle was saying.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, if we get him to the railroad without killing him," Dunn said gloomily.

Keever did not speak. But he was thinking: "Him and her—both of the royal strain of horseflesh. I'd like t' have her next colt—and I'm going t' have it!"

"Don't tell any one, when we get t' Twin Tanks with the big cavvy," Keever requested, "that Sunnymoat was with the Splendid Lady, or just where we caught him, either."

"Don't want folks t' know that she ranges in this part o' the country, I suppose?" Lyle said as Dunn grunted a stingy agreement to Keever's request. Keever only smiled.

CHAPTER V.

THE REWARD OF MERIT.

SAM JACKSON and Yates Gregory, at Twin Tanks, desert point of strategic importance in the campaign for the recapture of Sunnymoat, waited, almost without hope. Gregory, who had overseen the training of the stallion from colthood, could not bear to leave without him. Willis Gillian, his owner, had been called away by imperative business, for his activities were many.

The loyal negro was the first to spy the cavalcade coming up from the north side of the rails. The two were under the corrugated iron gallery of the Twin Tanks House. Their chairs came down on all fours with a bang and Sam, shouting wildly, pointed to the open country, where three mounted men, leading several horses, were coming at a slow jog. Yates, accustomed to have horse-hunting groups come in, had lost hope that this one might be the important company. Sam, however, knew the king, even though his coat were shaggy, his mane and forelock and tail filled with burs and cockles. Not to be restrained, he met the horses halfway, shouting:

"For de land sakes! What a job I'se a-gwine t' have com'in' the buzz outen yor tail!"

Yates, more phlegmatic, looked the big stallion over carefully.

"Sound in wind and limb?" he asked the bronzed leader of the successful expedition.

"Surest thing," answered Keever, quietly elated.

"You've made good; who'll I make the check out to?"

"W. P. Keever."

An hour later, the good check tucked in his pocket, Keever and his men rode for Keever's home, a small homestead place about two miles out of Encinal. Here Keever had his horse corral and kept his outfit. His men lived near by.

"This five thousand dollars goes like this," Billy told them, although there had been no agreement that they were to receive anything more than wages. "You each get a thousand, and I take the rest."

The two were delighted with this outcome. Billy modified the plan by saying:

"The news that Helen McNulty gave us didn't exactly lead to catching the stallion, but it did point to Black Cañon, and if it hadn't been for it, we'd wasted time around Railroad Cut and might've got turned in some other direction and been thrown clean off scent. I'm putting in two hundred and fifty dollars as her share."

"We'll go one hundred and twenty-five dollars each," Lyle said.

Herm Dunn agreed.

"We'll stop on the way back and tell her; we'll want a drink of that good water," Keever told them. "But we'll have to find some way so that her sot of a father won't get hold of the money."

"That's so," Lyle agreed.

On the corral bars, Helen McNulty waited, hopefully. She knew that on

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his way back, her hero, Billy Keever, would pass that way. She hoped he would catch the big stallion and win that reward. She pictured Billy, with that money, attired in a velvet riding suit, with a big flaming serape, a high-crowned, bell-rimmed Chihuahua hat, silvered taps, big conchas on his bridle, the reins with silver-chain ornamentation and all the trappings of frontier gallantry.

The lazy, shack-framed McNulty cayuse cocked an ear and signaled. Helen looked and then slid off the corral bars and streaked it toward the house.

She had seen Bart Upson and his two men approaching. Their attitude bespoke dejection. That part of it pleased the girl, but she did not want to see them. Her dad was away in Encinal Bend—on his usual mission, she had reason to believe. He had been drinking more than ever of late, and the girl was very unhappy. The little food she had had was of the poorest quality. She had managed to keep a cheerful face and to keep the shack fairly clean. She had sense enough, child as she was, to know that no prosperity could come to any one on the barren place that McNulty kept hold of because it was so near town he could slip in afoot and get drink by hanging around the saloons, waiting for treats from the chance "treaters" and barroom "easy marks" that infest every place where an excuse for hand-me-down conviviality exists.

Bart Upson and his men watered their nags, swung down, and started for the house. Inside they found no one to answer their hails. They began to ransack the place. Helen had not counted upon this. She had concealed herself in the box in which her father stored their heavy winter bedding, not now in use. Thinking to find alcoholic comfort, Bart Upson, who had been without a drink for over a week, was prepared to rummage everything to find it. He saw her with astonishment as he swung up the hinged lid of the box—then grabbed her and drew her out, laughingly.

"Waal, waal; hidin' from your Uncle Bart? Has your dad got any hooch in the house?" he asked.

"You ain't my uncle, an' if there was whisky here, dad would be here, not in the Bend," she said.

His reply was to try to kiss her. The girl's fingers, curved, clawlike, found his eyes, and he threw her across the room against the wall. She had barely missed his eyes themselves.

She remained panting against the wall, as the two others watched Bart Upson get his wits about him, in spite of the pain. He made a lunge and caught her, jammed her up onto the table.

"You'll dance now, till you drap," Bart Upson roared at her. "Or I'll get a quirt an' cut you t' ribbons."

"I won't," she answered, her hands clasped behind her and her eyes flashing.

"I'll see about that; don't let her get off that table boys, till I get a quirt," he said, starting toward the door.

"There's a quirt hangin' right at the door," she said, in a low, tense voice. "Try it," and she pointed to the quirt.

He stared at her. There was something in her voice and mien that told him he could cut her to ribbons before she would cringe before him, and that made him the more furious.

"You do it, you li'le wild cat," he breathed, and his men stared to see her sheer nerve in face of his rage, for Bart Upson had a name for terrible acts when he was enraged, and they could see signs of his anger plainly written on his brow now.

She remained silent. Bart stepped to the quirt and snatched it down. He raised it and struck with it. The lash cut a slit in the thin dress, across her shoulders. She did not wince, but her eyes blazed. The scene was so terrible that even the two black-hearted tools of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the scoundrel were about to say something to draw his attention elsewhere, when the door was swung open.

Al McNulty, Helen's father, stood on the threshold!

Bart laughed and said venomously: "I'm giving her a lesson in——"

"You're giving her one lesson too many," came the unexpected answer.

Bart stared at the man. His eyes were sunken, but his face showed less signs of liquor than he ever had seen on it.

"I'm half sober, for a wonder," McNulty spoke, almost tonelessly. "I've stood for your bluster and evil ways because I was mad for liquor. I've taken a dislike to the stuff. I went to town last night to drink. I couldn't force it down. I kept seeing my dead wife's eyes. I kept hearing my girl's voice. I came home to tell her I was through with liquor. I may be on the aidge o' the tremors. Well, let me be, but I'm through with drink."

Bart Upson threw back his head to laugh. Helen sank onto the table, her face in her hands, tears of joy trickling through her fingers. Her father saw the cut in the thin dress, the shaking shoulders, the attitude of gratitude of the child who had been so loyal to him. He saw the weal through the slit in the calico dress. He saw the drop of crimson falling from the lash of the quirt.

And McNulty saw red!

The girl, face covered, saw nothing.

Detonations shook the room; smoke filled it. The girl opened her eyes.

Her father was falling forward, coughing horribly. He struck the floor with a loud bang and was still. His gun, smoking, was in his clenched hand. Bart Upson, upright, was shoving his gun back into his holster. His face was a mask of fury.

"You seen how it was," he said to the other two. "He drew an' made me do it."

They nodded. Ace Vraine jerked his thumb toward the girl: "She'll tell."

"No, by the devil she won't," and Bart turned upon her.

There came a clatter of hoofs outside, and hails. "Ho, the house—Helen!"

"Billy Keever!" the girl called, leaping for the door. They tried to stop her, but she was through it like a scudding fox, calling: "Billy Keever!"

Bart Upson laughed heavily, his face pasty white now.

"Let me talk, an' you back up my talk; he tried t' draw; it was him or me," he adjured them. They nodded, and all went out together.

The girl was clinging to Keever's stirrup, looking up at his face and talking excitedly.

"That's enough, Helen," Keever told her. "Get off t' one side, pronto."

The girl scuttled aside and watched. Keever held the gaze of Bart Upson steadily, and began to walk his horse toward him. His men shifted a bit in their saddles.

"Stick 'em high," Keever ordered, his guns leaping out to beat the slower draw of his foe. Bart did not dare shoot, for the other's guns were out before his own had begun to show from the holster. His men did not show a sign of fight.

Two hours later, with Al McNulty buried, the girl, her three friends, and the prisoners, arrived in Encinal Bend, so named because there was a grove of encinal oaks in a bend of the creek there, making it a good place for picnics and barbecues and tournaments. Bart Upson and his pals were turned over to Sheriff Bascombe, charged with the slaying of Al Upson. Keever turned over their guns, and their horses were put into the town corral.

Helen, questioned, could only tell that she did not see the fight begun. She had been quirted, her father had appeared to defend her, and there had been a fight.

"Ought t' lynch them for quirting the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

girl, anyway," Keever told several of his friends. Bart Upson, while a leader of the worst elements, was none too popular among the generality of citizens there.

Helen they gave into the care of a widow, Mrs. Henry Potter, the town's mother-at-large, always ready to nurse wounded men or wash, iron, or darn for homeless males. To the widow they gave Helen's share of the reward to keep for her.

Next morning Bart Upson and his pals were gone. Keever found a note shoved under his door that read:

"You won the reward money and that's all. You'll never enjoy it."

There was no signature but Keever knew the hand that had written the threat against his future well-being. He kept the note and said nothing of it. The horses of the three pals were gone; Bart had taken his helpers with him and picked up his pack horses and stringers as well. Sheriff Bascombe, who was known to have received election aid from the worst elements of the region, made no vigorous pursuit. No one worried, though. It was felt that the region was well rid of the trio.

Keever put his reward money into the final payment on a small ranch he owned over close to the Wild Horse Range and, with Lyle and Herm Dunn, moved over there, leaving Helen with the widow.

The three saw her on the widow's steps as they rode past on their way out, and Helen waved her hand to them.

"Mighty hard t' think we won't see her as we ride past the old place," Lyle said. They had sold the old place for her for quite a sum, for the water was of use to a ranch whose lands adjoined it. Helen's father might have had money for the use of the water in dry years, but he would not take it. This money they had banked for her.

"You'll be a rich heiress some day," Keever made fun as they passed.

"I don't want t' be rich; I'd ruther be back home an' sit on the fence an' see you ride past," she said, hiding a sob with a smile.

"Will you swear t' that?" Keever asked, leaning down for her to kiss him.

She came speeding across the road, and gave him a kiss and a hug as he leaned over, then she raced back, her cheeks flaming. She mounted the chair and waved to them again and again.

The last thing they heard as they clattered out of town was her voice, like the muted A string of a fine violin.

"I love you, Billy Keever!"

"Darned li'le honey bunch," Keever thought.

Their eyes were misty as they rode.

CHAPTER VI.

RANCH OF THE PEAR.

KEEVER'S ranch was unstocked, therefore unnamed. He had an ambition to have it well stocked, and the scrub cattle that had been on it he had sold off clean at the last round-up, wishing to end a brand notoriously unthrifty. He confided to Herm and Lyle his desire to have a fine strain of horses and cattle some day. As they came to the ranch, on which was a fair sod house, built under a bank close to the little creek that watered the flat land that was the apple of Keever's eye, Billy, Lyle, and Dunn discussed the matter of a name. Keever, with something in the back of his head that he did not show them, suggested Rancho de la Pera, Ranch of the Pear.

"What's pears got t' do with it?" Dunn immediately objected.

"I'd like t' know that, too; there never was a pear on it an ain't likely t' be, unless it's a prickly pear or one in an air-tight," Lyle said.

"Remember that side box, where we roped Sunnymoat?"

They nodded, eying him curiously to make sure he was not playing one of his practical jokes on them.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was shaped laik a pear?"

"Sure was." Lyle had to agree, and Herm found only a growl by way of objection.

"Well, I got my money out o' a pear-shaped side-draw, and so I make this the Ranch of the Pear as a remembrancer."

"That's what I call a name," Lyle spoke admiringly.

"I'd call it something like Circle K or Tumblin' K or somethin' that'd go with your own in-which-ials." Dunn had his dig, but Keever laughed this away.

They moved into the long-unused sod house and cleaned it out. It had been used as a handy stopping place for every passing rider for months, since the former owners had moved away after Billy had made the purchase.

In catching wild horses, Billy had kept twenty of the best mares, pasturing them on the lands of a friend about fifty miles above, where they had been kept behind wire, so they could not stray. He had paid pasturage on them and knew their quality.

These superior wild mares, all of them with some touch of the blood of the Splendid Lady in them, Billy Keever counted upon to form the basis of his experiment in breeding polo stock. The get of Wild Horse Range ponies had been sold for that purpose for years past, crossed with thoroughbred stock. Their agility and sheer courage, product of generations spent in the fastnesses of the rugged range, where they had to fend for themselves and stand off attacks of bear and cougar, as well as keep away from man, had made them coveted as raw stock for breeding up into fancier sorts, exactly as certain wild-root stocks are coveted as foundations upon which are grafted or budded superior stocks raised for perfect fruits or flowers by experts in horticulture.

These wild ponies had something hard and enduring in their inner being that gave them heart and courage for almost anything. The superior mares of the range, like those Billy had, had it in them to be the mothers of super-horses. But to do that they needed to be mated with thoroughbreds of the highest lineage, such as a big horse ranch could afford to possess. Keever had sighed often as he had thought of the price of even a fair stallion of the kind he yearned to possess. The catching of Sunnymoat and the handling of him had shown him, for the first time, what a really royal horse is, and could be, to a man. The game racer had made friends with Billy Keever easily, and Keever had parted with him with a deep pang in his heart. Parting with him, he had understood the feeling that sometimes made men of ordinary honesty turn horse thieves. Keever kept this feeling to himself, for he would have been ashamed to have had his pals know of it.

Now, with the new ranch to fix up, corrals to build and plans for the future to make, Keever nursed one big ambition that he kept secret.

With the departure of Bart Upson, the only formidable rival Keever had had in the long quest for the Splendid Lady was gone.

Investing most of his remaining loose money in brood mares, bought at a low price from an Englishman, who had been conducting a horse ranch rather as a fad than on a strictly business basis, Billy Keever secured a fine bargain. He hired a couple of acquaintances to look after affairs around the home ranch and then he, Bert Lyle, and Herm Dunn started out to hunt horses again—became "mustangers." He was able to put much good well-watered land under fence. His stock bore the brand of a pear, in outline.

Fair success attended their efforts. The big hunt through the Wild Horse Range for Sunnymoat had made all the wild cavvys restless. Some of them had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moved far off into the desert, to quarters usually used by them in winter only. Other bands worked to east or west, into other ranges for a time. Gradually, as the excitement over the king subsided, they began to drift back. Then Keever and his friends made some fair hauls of commoner range stock. These would pay expenses for a while.

Touching at the home ranch from time to time, taking on "breaking" contracts for ranches that wanted saddle stock gentled, Billy and his men were kept busy. The finer horses that they broke for near-by outfits were really gentled—handled with an eye to bringing out their better qualities and starting them on the road to become real cow horses. The offscourings were apt to be "busted wide open," and brought into subjection quickly and then sold off to horse traders whose conscience would permit of re-sale of those same ornery brutes as "saddle-broke an' easy on a man's pants."

During this time Keever found time to go off on long, lonely hunts by himself. As he was known by his men to be long-headed and often scouted out likely horse territory or discovered new ways to capture desired wild horses while on such solitary trips, his men thought little of it.

But Billy had an object in view. He was watching, afar, the Splendid Lady. He had not led his men after her in weeks and even months. Instead, he contented himself with watching her from afar.

The fine mare had joined, he found, the cavvy of a black stallion of good points—a young herd master. Billy could tell, by studying her, that she was with the caviya, but not really part of it. She was in the status of the mare who takes up with a given band after her own mate has died or been captured, but who merely roams with those mares for company's sake. Another year, if the Splendid Lady remained with those same companions, she would "belong." Now she was accepted, but it was to be noted that she usually grazed a bit off to one side, nor did the black herd master pay her that attention that he gave to his other subjects. Nor did she accept his attentions in good part. She made it plain that she was there because she wished company—that was all. These chance acquaintanceships, the result of the inexorable workings of fate, are accepted with equine philosophy. It was the season when the herd instinct is weakest, and when the Splendid Lady seemed to wander off by herself at times, she was not watched so jealously by the young black stallion as were his other mares.

It was on these lonely wanderings that Keever watched the splendid Lady closest. He had marked the black stallion's band as one that he would not chase that year, for he did not wish the Splendid Lady to be disturbed more than was necessary. When he found her going off by herself, Billy did not lose sight of her.

Billy's hopes were rising all this time. He looked forward to a certain event as the means of placing him in possession of a horse, that, given luck, the needed skill in handling and training, he would have assurance that his polo stock in the future would command top prices and be a source of both pleasure and profit.

CHAPTER VII.

"SUNSHINE."

LYING flat on a shelf of cliff, Billy Keever jammed his big binoculars to his eyes and watched the Splendid Lady as she came cautiously from behind a vine screen into the large cañon she had selected as her place of refuge for the great event of her yearly round.

Keever knew that behind the vine screen the beautiful mare had her colt cached. That was what he had waited for. That was why he did not want

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her driven during the months just passed. He would have laughed at any one who had proposed his not driving the commoner mares of the range in the effort to catch them. But the Splendid Lady he had marked out for his own. He had sent astray several outfits that had tried to get her. He had played the game on her side, that she might be favored. With his great skill in horse hunting, he had thwarted the plans of other hunters and had made his own fit in together, so that he had trailed her to her hiding place at just the right time, and now was ready to reap the reward of his patience and knowledge of her habits. Ever since that electric moment when he had seen the Splendid Lady—her great mate a captive of man's wiles—disappear against the gory sunset colors of the rim rock of the side box off Black Cañon, Keever had schemed for just the end that he now had in view.

Keever knew that the Splendid Lady would disappear down the cañon for a time, to drink and graze. The newborn colt, hid up like a fawn, would lie still and so motionless that it would seem to be dead. That mysterious provision of nature that made the young colt, thus seemingly deserted, give off no scent or be at least very hard to scent, would preserve it as against ordinary dangers. For the good of her offspring the mare must go aside alone this once, eat of strengthening herbs, medicinal in their effects, and receive from the largesse of Nature strength to impart endurance to the new life now hidden in some recess or grass patch of the little retreat behind the vine screen.

As the mare turned away from the vines, after a last reassuring sniff, stepping warily over the stony channel of the little creek, Keever saw something that made him jerk erect and seize his rifle with the telescope sight!

A giant cougar that had watched the mare as carefully as had Keever, was slinking along, from up the cañon, gliding along on its belly, ears laid back. Keever knew that the beast was but waiting till the mare had gone aside, that the cougar might dash into the little vine-screened recess and make a meal of the helpless colt. Keever knew it was a long shot, but he swung his rifle up and was steadying for the pull, when, charging into the field of vision, came the mare, ears laid back. She had whirled at the last moment, evidently having caught a scent of the cougar by some shift of vagrant winds, and now was determined to interpose herself between the mountain lion and her baby.

So sudden was the mare's charge that the cougar, ordinarily so cowardly, had no time to dodge, but had to make a fight. This fight in ordinary circumstances would have not amounted to much. The cougar would have run at the first opportunity. But now the mare acted with fury; the cougar missed its foothold in its first wild scramble to get underway, and then the mare had stamped on the lion's back, the loose folds of skin slithering under the hoofs of the mare and catching under them. The cougar, maddened, whirled under the mare's belly and clinched, clawing desperately. Stung to deadly madness by its hurts, the mare reared, came down, crushing the cougar, that now had but one instant desire, to kill. Cornered, the cougar would fight to the last; finding an inch of retreat open, it would run from even a yellow cur.

The cougar's tawny body writhed, came out from under the mare, then seemed to twine about her as the cougar mounted the mare's heaving flanks. The big teeth and four claws of the cougar worked; blood flowed.

Keever, at last getting the cougar clear in the delicate sights of the long-range rifle, let drive.

The roar of the rifle filled the cañon with echoes. The cougar leaped aside, collapsed, died. The mare, bleeding ter-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ribly, shook herself, made a few feeble steps, fell on her knees, and remained down.

When Keever got down to the bottom of the cañon, he approached the quiet forms of the cougar and mare. The cougar and mother horse both were dead.

Tears welled up in Keever's eyes and brimmed over onto his sunburned and then bearded cheek, as he gazed at the form of that beautiful mare, upon whom he had depended for so much in his plans for the future. The severed jugular vein showed where the cougar had torn his way to her very life, just before the bullet found the cougar's heart. Now both victor and vanquished were still and both were beautiful, even in death.

Keever left them there, parted the vine screen, and went into the little grassy recess where the wise mare had cached her colt.

He went over the hiding place, almost inch by inch. It was not until he had almost stumbled over the hidden colt that he was aware of its presence. It was concealed in a patch of long, coarse grass and so cleverly that he found that it seemed almost to disappear when he took his gaze from it momentarily. The satiny skin, now dappled and of no pronounced color, was perfectly adapted to concealment.

Keever stood long, admiring the pretty creature. He noted with keenest pleasure that the colt bore marks that proved both his paternity and maternity. He was to be, if he grew up to be a healthy herd master, a horse with a coat of sunny sheen, with a lineback stripe of extra darkness, and a heavy crest and white feet and a light streak in the tail that told of blood from the mysteriously potent strain of the Godolphin and Sultan Selim strains.

"By golly; you're a hoss a'ready. And now how'm I a-goin' t' feed you?"

Keever knew that he must act quickly. Nature had given the colt a supply of blood that would keep him alive for many hours, without his taking food. This wise provision of nature Keever took advantage of. As the chick finds in the egg in the final hours of hatching food that, included in its body, gives it all it needs for the first twenty-four or thirty-six hours of its life, so the young of the mammalian species finds itself nourished by the blood received as a gift from its mother, to start it forth as a full-bodied entity. Until that primal blood was weakened by fatigue or hunger, Keever was safe with the new-born colt.

He got the colt tied with soft strips of cloth and into a blanket, pinned at the corners and down the side seams with big horse pins or safety catches. He lifted the colt onto his shoulders and carried him out of the recess and left him till he could get his own horses down to the level where the prize was. Then he got the colt tied to his saddle and took him across the ranges to his own Rancho de la Pera.

"What's the use of tryin' t' take those pains with just a colt?" Herm Dunn asked him as he came in, staggering with fatigue from his long and wearying trip.

"Is he a fine hoss?" Lyle asked, peeping into a corner of the pinned-in blanket.

"By Sunnymoat, out of Splendid Lady," Keever informed them crisply.

"Well, I'll——" Herm Dunn began.

"Gee, it takes a chump for luck," Lyle almost shouted.

Then they fell upon him and began to belabor him with balled fists and to embrace him lovingly, for they were of the breed of men who do not begrudge a friend good luck.

"He'll make a royal herd master," Keever rejoiced.

"You cain't afford t' keep him; he'll bring a mint o' coin," Herm Dunn reminded him.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He'll bring me just the satisfaction o' owning him, and that's all," Keever decided, and there was a firm set to his jaw that told how determined he was to keep the pretty colt.

They found a foster mother for the colt in a mare that had lost her own babe and was so eager to replace it that she did not inquire too closely when the orphaned colt was introduced to her by night, under proper precautions.

Next morning the colt was to be seen, in the separate corral Keever had provided for him and his foster mother, enjoying himself as if his own dam were not back in the wilds, cold and dead.

"Some herd master for a poor man, he'll make, if he grows up accordin' t' his breedin'," Keever rejoiced.

"You bet," Lyle chimed in.

"For once I agree," Herm Dunn said, to their surprise. For the first time he had found nothing to croak about. "But I'll warn you that it's as well that no one knows what blood he's got in him yet awhile. He could be stole now, as well as later. If no one knows what he is, we won't have t' maintain a standin' army t' keep the hoss thieves away from him."

A few days later Keever rode to Encinal Bend for supplies. As he rode into town a friend signed for him to draw aside. The friend bade him lean over, and then he whispered:

"Watch out; Bart Upson has been seen, and he's making bad medicine. No real chase being made for him, he's got bold again. You know the sheriff here won't press the case against him—matter of fact, the sheriff is a bit crooked himself. Upson's apt t' be lookin' for you, Billy."

"All similar," Keever said, loosening his gun in its holster.

Then he rode toward the town.

His friend, Kris Whalen, followed at a discreet distance. It was Keever's fight, but he was determined to see that no one shot his friend from behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUITE A YOUNG LADY.

KEEVER went up the town's main street, down the cluttered-up lane behind the buildings, and into several resorts where Upson might be. He did not find the man then. The bad men of the town scowled at Keever's back and whispered among themselves after he had passed. Keever, hearing these sibilant hints, knew that Upson was not planning an open meeting, but some serpent's trick. Leaving word that he was not running from Upson, Keever finally told Whalen that there would not be any trouble for a time and went toward the house of the Widow Henry Potter.

During the past year Keever had received a few scrawled notes from the girl, now almost fourteen. He had known her since he had been a cub puncher and she, tiny hero-worshiper, had taken up the habit of calling to him, as he passed: "I love you, I love you, Billy Keever."

Keever and his two pals had talked over Helen's future during the past year. The share of the reward money they had given her and the money received for her father's property had placed her out of reach of want. She was not a wealthy little lady, but she had enough to keep her till she was of age, and to educate her. Mrs. Potter was giving her the rudiments of education, having been a school-teacher before Hen Potter had married her. It was understood among the girl's friends that she was to be "finished off" at a mission school later.

Keever found Mrs. Potter alone in her little house, where she baked and mended for the better element of the town's men. None of the boys of the range had as yet succeeded in making her forget Hen Potter, at least long enough to give the affirmative to a certain important query.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where's Helen?" he asked, sailing his hat up onto a set of antlers over the doorway and unbuckling his belt as he slumped down into an easy chair that Mrs. Potter always invited him to occupy upon his arrival.

"Be back pretty soon; goin' t' stay t' supper? Tin-can apple sass an' pork chops——"

"You cain't drive me from it no how a-tall, Ma Potter," he answered her plaintively.

"I ain't goin' t' try. Jus' be comfortable an' I'll rustle grub. Helen'll be in pretty soon. She's visiting some gal friends down the other end o' the town."

Keever nodded and smoked while he studied the latest most popular books—the widow's newest mail-order catalogues. The light failed; Keever sat there idly, glad to have nothing to do for once. Only the end of his center-fire cigar showed where he was. The widow had proposed that she light the lamp, but he had vetoed that, saying that he would sit in the dusk.

"Pleasant t' be out o' the bright lights once in a dawg's age," he had told her.

Odors of good home cooking pervaded the humble home. Keever found himself wondering if the Ranch of the Pear would ever have a loving genius to preside over it and turn it from a house into a home.

Then there came a scurry of feet, a smacking sound, Mrs. Potter's protest at rough handling when she had her "hands full of aiggs," and then Keever heard the girl come rocketing into the room where he was, calling as she came.

"Oh, Billy Keever. I'm so glad you've come; I love you, Billy Keever."

The next moment she had thrown her arms about Keever's neck.

"Billy Keever—what's the matter; you've pushed me away—oh——"

She stared at him as a match flared. He stared at her.

Her red hair was now done up nicely; the hands that had been so rough and chapped were now well cared for. The thin calico dress that had slatted in the dry-land winds about her thin limbs had given place to a frilly white dress, and her stockings and shoes were beyond reproach.

"Helen," Billy said gravely, as the match went out against his tingling finger tips, "better not say that, that a way no more."

"Why—why not——" Her answering query came from the darkness.

"Wait!" And he struck another match. This time he set the match to the wick of the lamp, and then sat back in his chair again. She was still before him, having edged back to face him as he had returned to his seat.

"Now look at me," he said, shaking a lean, strong forefinger at her. "Listen."

"I like t' look at you an' listen," she pouted at him.

"It's been all right, you tellin' me that you love me, up to now, but you're getting t' be a big girl; you'll be goin' away t' school some day and comin' back an' marryin' some nice boy. You're almost a lady, an' we better not be so free an' easy in our talk from now on," he concluded, very serious indeed in face and voice and manner.

"*I* marry some nice boy! I won't, ever. I'll marry a man when I marry, a man with whiskers, even——"

Billy ran his hand over his well-stubbled chin.

"I might even marry Herm Dunn," she declaimed. "Or even Bert Lyle, or even——"

She turned and fled to the door; then she wrinkled her nose at him and whispered, but the whisper carried to his heart.

"All right, I won't say that I love you, Billy Keever, not any more, unless you ask me to, but I do, jus' the same, jus' the same——"

She was turning to flee again, when he called her back.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Helen, come here; I want t' tell you about my new colt, Sunshine, that I wrote you about."

"All right; that'll be nice," and she came to the arm of his chair and put her arm about his neck and listened while he told her details of the colt's condition.

CHAPTER IX.

UPSON LISTENS.

BART UPSON, back in the Bend, knew, that when he had bragged of meeting Billy Keever, he had bragged more than he had the nerve to perform. He had been worsted several times by Keever and had a healthy respect for Keever's ability to take care of himself. But he had made his brag; now he must make good on it, or acknowledge that he was a man with a streak of yellow in his backbone and to acknowledge that would be to give up his dominance in a certain clique whose activities were giving Upson an easy living, if an unclean one.

Upson had absented himself from town upon hearing that Keever was there. Upson had made an excuse that he had business to attend to, but would be back later. He intended to come and find a way to waylay Keever—shooting from behind, if chance offered. He did not dare meet him in a fair fight.

Upson suspected that Keever would go to the Widow Potter's, for his henchman had told the rough leader that when in town Keever always went to visit his protége.

Hearing, upon his return after dark, that Keever was at the Potter house, Upson had stolen out of the rear of the Diamond Cat, where he hung out in town, down along the back line of buildings to the rear of the Potter place. Here, hugging the wall of the house, Upson listened, peering in through the curtain from time to time as Keever told Helen McNulty about his new and wonderful colt. He heard Keever wind up:

"And don't you tell a soul, now, honey bunch; he's a world beater of a hoss a'ready, if he is on'y a spraddlin' colt."

"How much is a colt like that worth?" Helen asked.

"I'd not put a price on him, honey bunch; he's worth more than money t' me, just t' have such a wonder hoss all for my own. A man like me'd never get a chance at one like that again."

"But isn't he in some way a colt belonging to that rich Mr. Gillian, that owns Sunnymoat?"

"No; he's from an unbranded mare, and he bore no brand. He belongs t' me, by range law. He's like a maverick calf that a way," answered Keever emphasizing this with a finger waggled before her freckled nose.

"Is he branded yet with your pear sign? Does it hurt a baby horse to brand him, much?" she inquired anxiously.

"No; I ain't branded him yet. I kind o' hate t' treat him like a common range hoss. I ain't had the heart to run an iron on him yet. It won't hurt him, much, though, when I do. He'll have a tender spot for a few days, but it'll soon pass away."

"Don't you hurt him any more than you can help," she warned him, solicitously anxious for the pretty colt Keever had described in such glowing terms.

"Not any, especially seein's you're interested, honey bunch."

"I like to have you call me that, Billy Keever," she said, suddenly kissing him and running away.

Keever rubbed the place where her lips had touched his stubble-sown cheek and then got up, belted on his guns, got his hat off the antlers, and stepped into the night.

He did not see the silent, furtive man slink away from the side of the house and steal down along behind the build-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ings toward the Diamond Cat. It was Upson who had overheard every word and seen everything through a gap in the curtains.

The air outside was like the touch of a cool hand on Keever's cheek. He drew his broad brim well over his eyes, and saw that his guns were loose in their low-riding holsters. Then he stepped to the center of the road and started down. His eye, roving to right and left, took in the successive gaps between buildings, in order that he might be sure that no one was in such a place, in hiding.

A man started into view halfway down. Keever's hand snapped away from the gun butt as he recognized the voice of his friend, Whalen, who gave him, in a quick phrase, the desired information.

"He was seen goin' into the Diamond Cat half an hour ago."

"Thanks, Whalen," returned Keever, not pausing in his measured stride.

"Some of us will run him out of town if you say," Whalen offered. "The decent element here's about tired of him and his pals."

"This is my say-so, thanks," grimly responded Keever, going on.

Whalen fell in behind Keever, about ten yards in the rear. The bright lights of the Diamond Cat were alight by then. Trade was not what it would be later. A few men were going in or out. Keever strode across the threshold, tensely alert. His quick eyes took in the individuals in the several groups. At the bar were three men—Ace Vraine, Dodge Seltzer—and Bart Upson.

"Upson!" Keever called.

Upson did not turn. He had seen Keever enter, having had his eyes on the back bar mirror all the while and having told Ace and Dodge that he expected the younger man in shortly.

Upson had his plans all made. He intended to goad Keever to madness by taunts, get him to start a draw, and then, without turning, to shoot him from a shoulder holster, firing by taking an angle by watching the mirror. Upson had done this trick several times in his career, but never had tried it in the town where he now was. He figured Keever would come close. He had practiced this trick shot often.

"Upson," Keever called again.

"I heard you, but I don't listen t' you," Upson snarled out.

"Turn round and say what you've been sayin' all over town about me," Keever commanded. His hands had not touched his guns. He was standing squarely behind Upson, watching his every move. Upson toyed with his glass, spinning it around on the bar. The room was very still.

"I'm no dawg, t' be told t' turn round that way," Upson objected, in a very low tone. Vraine and Seltzer edged away from his sides and turned about to face Keever. He spoke to them sharply.

"If you two want in on this, begin now. If not, keep out."

"Reg'lar bad man, he is," Upson jeered, spinning the glass down the bar and away from him. He had both hands on the bar rail. His shoulders, Keever noted, were level; neither was higher than the other.

"Turn an' say it," Keever ordered again.

Upson's right shoulder was lifting; his left lowering. His eyes, glittering, were on the mirror.

"I said t' turn an' say it——" Keever was repeating.

Smoke winged out into a billowing plume behind Upson's left shoulder. Keever staggered to the right as his gun leaped and began to talk, just as Upson wheeled, his belt gun starting to answer. Then Upson crumpled down sidewise, partly to the front. Keever stood, his gun up, waiting. Upson did not move. Keever spoke to Vraine and Seltzer.

"Want to come in?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They shook their heads.

Vraine bent over Upson, then said: "It's cases for him; we'll take care o' the body."

Keever walked out backward, his guns ready to answer anything Upson's friends might say. No one tried to stop him.

Keever at once reported to Sheriff Bascombe and told him the case, from end to end.

"You say he's daid?" Bascombe asked.

"I left him for daid. An' he's better that a way than in jail with you on the outside guardin' him," Keever shot out at the lax official.

"That's as a man thinks. Well, it seems like a case of self-defense. I ain't lookin' for trouble, Billy."

"You know where I can be found, if wanted; I'm goin' t' ride now."

"Adios," said the sheriff, starting toward the Diamond Cat.

Ten minutes later Billy was riding toward the Pear Ranch. He was sorry he had had to kill a man, as he thought, but glad whenever he thought of Helen.

"If she was three—four years older now—dawg-gone it, I ain't only twenty-five right now," he found himself saying.

Then came another thought. "By and by she'll meet up with a nice kid, her own aige an' then she'll nacherally take t' him, not to an old-timer like me."

He rubbed that place on his stubbled chin where her lips had been pressed, and he sighed.

CHAPTER X.

UPSON LIVES—AND HATES.

IN the little back room of the Diamond Cat, Vraine and Seltzer watched over their chief, Upson. He was barely alive. Doctor Wilson, who had just left, had said that the wounded man might recover.

Bascombe looked over the hole in the back of the man's coat, at the armpit, and asked a few questions.

"Keever t' blame?" he asked several who were in the room.

Upson, on the rude couch they had made from boxes and blankets, stirred, then rasped out: "Never mind that. I ain't making any complaint. We fought an' I got plugged. I'm goin' t' get well an' finish him."

"Better keep away from him; he might get you the third time, as he has the first two," the sheriff reminded him.

"This time he won't get me; I'm goin' t' break him by inches, heart and soul, and then I'll kill him afterward."

He fell back exhausted, his face writhed with a hatred implacable as it was deep.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNSHINE GROWS.

AT the Pear, Billy found everything going well. His first spare hours were given up to getting better acquainted with the colt, Sunshine, now well on his feet and bobbing about the special enclosure that he shared with his foster mother. Keever noted with delight the deepening of the color marks that proved his royal paternity. Already the colt was full of pretty tricks and inclined to be friendly.

"We ain't goin' to make a pet hoss out of him," Keever told them. "These pet hosses are all right till you forget some day an' let them get a hold of you by the slack o' the pants or cheek and then you wish you had brought them up with some sense in their fool haids. An' don't teach him no foxy tricks. Might let him shake hands or bob his haid 'yes' or shake it for 'no,' but these lady tricks that foolish men teach hosses make them everybody's hoss, because every one wants t' make them do their batch o' tricks and they get t' know every one and that makes them out a plumb fool, entire."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So the colt was let alone, except that soon he had a light halter put onto him and after that a tiny pad, so that he would know the feel of the saddle from the start. These little things imposed no hardship on him. In fact he soon became nervous if saddle pad or halter were taken off. No attempt was made to tie the halter at first, but it was used to lead Sunshine about with, and before he was six months old he had the rudiments of colt education thoroughly in mind.

Keever and his pals hunted horses, had good luck, and sold what they caught. The brood mares did well. They went about breaking horses by contract. Owing to Keever's mastery of all pertaining to horseflesh, they did this work rapidly and made splendid money at it. Keever bought and sold off again several lots of horses that other ranchers did not market for themselves, and thus he made more than expenses, while all the time his stock at home was gaining. His affairs promised well, indeed.

The months passed in a rush of steady work. Several times the trio at the Pear had letters from Helen McNulty. To each was attached a postscript:

P. S. Billy Keever, I mustn't say it, but I still think it.

"What does she mean by that?" Bert Lyle asked.

"Some kid joke," Keever put him off with.

"I bet it's something more'n that," Herm Dunn teased him with.

Keever had no answer ready for him.

The long months of fall and winter passed; spring came to bring bloom to the wastelands—a fleeting bloom that the heat of summer would slay. Yet while it lasted it was lovely, and nowhere more so than on and about the ranch of Keever. They heard that Bart Upson, fully recovered, had disappeared from his old haunts about Encinal.

"We're coming up, Ma Potter and I and my friend, Ols Brownlew," Helen wrote them.

"That's a nephew of Mrs. Potter's. I've heard her talk of him; must be in Encinal on a visit," Keever told them.

Three days later the three rode into the ranch yard. Mrs. Potter was bubbling with gossip. Upson had been suspected of illicit traffic over the border and of participation in raids in which Mexican outlaws figured. Ace Vraine and Dodge Seltzer had gone with him.

"That's good news—about their bein' gone," Lyle said.

"But he'll come back," Herm Lunn added pessimistically.

Keever said nothing. He was watching Helen swing down. She had galloped, with young Brownlew, to the corral where Sunshine was. Keever noted how well grown the girl was and how her eyes fairly sparkled with health and the joy of living. The young lad with her was well knit, a merry-faced lad, who already carried a gun and lass rope and seemed a capable beginner in the lore of the range. Keever, reflecting how he, himself, had had to make a hand when about the age of young Brownlew, thought to himself that the youngster had the makin's of a man already.

"This is my boy friend, Olis Brownlew," Helen introduced him. Brownlew shook hands heartily all around, looking each man square in the eye as he did so.

"Ols has got good stuff in him," the Widow Potter told them as the four older ones went into the ranch house, leaving Helen and the boy to put out their horses and look about. Then she saw a great many things to do and began to do them. The first thing she got hold of was Herm Dunn's town-meetin' pants, lacking some buttons and needing a patch.

"Men," she said, eying them disdainfully, "are plumb disresponsible. I'm goin' to mend these, if I never do another thing."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What's the use; I'll wear a hole in the new-mown patch an' bust those buttons off," Herm Dunn expostulated.

"I know; your strong point is sittin' down an' hitching around till you wear out your pants and strain the buttons off. Is there a needle an' thread in this forsaken, low-flung outfit?"

"Yes'm," Dunn said, watching her admiringly as she proceeded to sew him back to respectability.

Bert Lyle volunteered to rustle wood for the coming meal. Keever went out. He saw Helen and Ols Brownlew, at the corral bars, admiring Sunshine, now a satin-coated, prancing colt with high-arched neck and springy gait.

"Nice boy she's with; about the right aige for her," Keever was thinking. "And she didn't say those words to me when she came. Oh, well, time she had a li'le love affair with a boy of her own aige."

Helen wheeled about and saw him. Her freckled nose wrinkled up and she called: "Oh, Billy Keever, I ain't sayin' it, but I'm doin' it—so there," and she stuck out her red tongue at him.

Keever grinned and went singing about his own tasks.

CHAPTER XII.

UPSON'S PLANS.

PASSING up and down the long trails on his nefarious errands, Bart Upson and his friends seemed to keep away from the Pear Ranch. Yet often, after his men were asleep, he rode to a high point of ground, whence he could watch the Pear at dawning and study the habits of Keever and his men. In time he took Vraine and Seltzer into the secret of Sunshine's paternity and pointed out to them, from their place of observation, the corral where the pretty colt was.

"Let him raise that colt; it's for me he's doin' it," Upson told them.

"Got a plan?" Vraine asked.

"I'll let you two know when it's time; there'll be money and satisfaction for us all when I strike this time."

"You won't be able t' hit hard enough t' suit me," Seltzer remarked. "This paltry Pear outfit sure gives me the fantods."

"That filly of old McNulty's is growing into a fine one," Vraine pointed out.

"Yes, an' I've got an idea about her, too," informed Upson.

"Spill it," Vraine invited.

Upson emitted one word. "El Moro!" It was the name of an outlaw chief.

"He'd give a lot for her," Vraine said.

They all agreed, and then they made off to a point where their horses were concealed. They were on their way toward the border. Two nights later Upson left them and rode to a small town in the Big Thicket where he wrote a letter, after poring over a news sheet that he had with him—one giving a sketch of Willis Gillian and his Sunnymoat stables in the East. Upson's letter, in substance, was:

> DEAR SIR: I can deliver to you a colt by Sunnymoat, out of a fine Wild Horse Range mare. I have read how you keep every colt by Sunnymoat. This one would go well as part of your polo pony stock. Write me at Twin Tanks, where I can make delivery. The colt is unbranded, and I own it and can give perfect title. B. S. UPSON.

A postscript directed that the answer be sent to the little Big Thicket town. Upson was to remain there for a time, for reasons best known to himself and the outlaw El Morro, who had come to rely upon the renegade for information and services north of the line. Gillian, Upson had read, was on the coast and soon would be at Tia Juana.

Ten days later Upson rode into the little Thicket town again and found his reply awaiting him. It must have pleased him, for he laughed as he read it and then rode for the camp of El Morro, where he made another bargain

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that also pleased him immensely. Riding forth from El Morro's camp, Upson joked with Vraine and Seltzer unrestrainedly, ending up with:

"Now I'm goin' t' pay Keever off, one hundred per cent."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DECOY CALL.

THE hot months passed; Sunshine grew apace. Already he was showing signs of shaping up and out of colthood. He gave promise of revealing admirable points as a two-year-old.

Helen had been up twice during the summer—once with the handy Brownlew lad, who continued to render her loyal service and comradeship. Keever liked the lad and taught him many fine points of horse lore. The boy developed a fondness for Sunshine and was able to ride him now a little, with a light saddle. Keever did not want to ride the horse himself, but the colt soon permitted the young fellow to ride him without a protest. Humane methods had taught him to accept man and his ways as beneficial to him.

It had been agreed that Widow Potter, Helen and young Brownlew were to come up before Helen started for the mission school, where she was to remain till the next spring. Keever watched for them anxiously. He wanted to see the girl again for some reason he could not quite explain to himself. Helen now was in her fifteenth year. Early promise of beauty in her had been fulfilled, yet it was not a fragile, fleeting beauty; rather it was the healthy, full bloom of the girl who in years ahead would be the home maker, the mother, the ideal wife for the manly man of affairs and courage.

For four days the trio had a happy time about the place. Mrs. Potter by now was finding more and more things of Herm Dunn's to mend and more things to scold him about.

"Keeps a man on the hump; dang a woman," Herm would splutter when the other two ragged him about her attentions to him.

The morning of the fifth day a Mexican rode into the ranch yard and asked for "dhee Señor Kee-var."

The Mexican bore a note to Keever, signed with the name of Frank Wheelock, owner of the B K Ranch, fifty miles to the westward. It said:

> Those bay hosses you wanted are now for sale. Come over and talk it over with me. I don't think you'll go away without a bargain.

"That's the lot of mares that I want, but haven't so far been able to get Wheelock to name a price on," Keever told them. "I hate to go down there now, but it's worth while. I left a price with him when we talked it over in the Diamond Cat in Encinal last time I was in there."

"Sure that's Wheelock's hand of write?" Dunn found fault.

"Why, he never wrote t' me, but the letter must be from him, for he refers to just what we talked of. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'; only I was thinking some one might want t' play some mean joke an' get you off on a wild goose chase."

"Who would do that?" Keever asked.

"Don't ask me; anything mean's liable to happen to a man."

"Yes; he might even get married to a widow——" Lyle began, and then he dodged a skillfully thrown potato that Mrs. Potter had partly peeled.

"You won't get married this long-come-short," she shouted at Lyle.

"I don't want t' be," Lyle let out, just dodging another missile as he bolted through the door.

"I'll ride an' see 'bout those mares," Keever decided.

Two hours later he was gone. Helen and young Brownlew "set him down the trail" a ways and then rode back together, racing their ponies like mad and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rocketing up to the corral where Sunshine was. They looked him over for the hundredth time that day and then rode off to where Lyle and Dunn were building fence.

That night Helen sat up long, listening to the men's tales of horse hunts, told for her benefit and Ols Brownlew's. Mrs. Potter sewed, casting a wistful eye at Herm Dunn at times.

Before retiring, the girl sat on a box alongside her window sill and leaned out. The night had turned dark, after an earlier period of moonlight.

Helen could hear Sunshine snorting in the corral. She even heard him nicker pleadingly, and she called to him softly. He answered her. So she did not think it strange when after a time he nickered again. Bert Lyle, still "yarning," with Dunn and Mrs. Potter in the other room, asked Helen:

"Is that you talkin' t' Sunshine?"

"I spoke to him, yes, and he answered me, Uncle Bert."

"All right."

"Better go out an' see what it means," Dunn said, offering his habitual bit of disturbing advice.

"I'll not; he's jus' talking t' honey bunch."

Helen listened, with her head on the window sill. She thought of the happy hours she had spent at the Pear Ranch and of the way Keever and his pals had taken care of her. She was going away to the mission school and would be away a long, long time—till next spring. She thought of how Ols Brownlew's father, too, had decided to send him to school at the same place. She was glad she would have company there—some one she knew.

Helen was happy—just happy and thankful. All the love of her trusting heart was eager to brim over for the benefit of some one then. The perfect, soft air of night, the sense of well-being, the thought of her loyal protectors made the girl thankful. She thought of the loving care the widow had given her and was thankful for that, too.

Helen leaned farther out of the window as she heard a curious sound, like the call of some night bird. She wanted to locate the bird if possible.

A big, hairy hand grasped her throat. She could not make a sound, so quickly was she throttled. She felt her body dragged over the sill. Then blackness came over her. She seemed to be falling, falling, falling—then she seemed to strike with a crash.

A light flared in her eyes. She heard a man whisper: "Got the hoss; and the girl's comin' to all right; now t' cash in on the colt with Gillian and on the gal with El Moro. Le's light out o' here pronto an' sudden."

Then she felt a horse move under her and knew that she was tied to a saddle, like a bag of meal. Then she lost consciousness again.

Dawn found her traveling with a rumble in her ears that she made out to be the noise of a covered wagon, bumping along a rough trail. She was under many blankets, almost smothered. She could feel that her limbs were bound. A big roll of soft stuff gagged her effectually, but she could see, from under a slit in the wagon sheet's rear.

Behind her, tied to the rear of the wagon, was the colt, Sunshine, leg-weary, but gamely following.

She heard men talking on the seat of the wagon. They were Upson, Vraine, and Seltzer! She wished then for a touch of a strong hand.

She thought of Keever, Lyle, Dunn, Mrs. Potter, and Ols Brownlew, her hard-riding pal and playfellow.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISCOVERY OF THE KIDNAPING.

"I WONDER where Helen is?" Bert Lyle asked, as he mowed away golden-brown flapjacks next morning. Mrs. Potter, presiding over the griddle, asked:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Want another, turned just the right shade o' brown?"

"No'm, I have no room for any more fillin'," Dunn answered softly.

"Oh, sugar in the gourd!" Lyle exclaimed. "This is gettin' too sweet round here; any one seen Helen? She's always down t' eat with us."

"I ain't heard her yet," Ols Brownlew answered.

"Well, you'd have heard her if any one did, I guess," Lyle returned lightly, and then he went to the alcove where the girl's bunk was and shook the blankets that curtained it off and called:

"Helen; come on out an' see the mornin' that's been made for you especially."

There was no reply.

"She's likely gone out t' talk t' that Sunshine colt," Mrs. Potter told him. "She sometimes jumps out the window that a way an' goes t' him before she comes out t' breakfas'."

"I'll bet that's it," answered Brownlew, shaking the blankets again. Then, encouraged by Mrs. Potter, he peeped through a crack between blanket and alcove frame.

"She's gone, entire; she's out at the corral," he informed them.

Ols Brownlew got up and sauntered to the door. He opened it and looked out.

"Sunshine's gone!" he yelled, bolting out.

"Old mare must've found that weak spot in the fence an' wandered off," Herm ejaculated, bolting the last mouthful of flapjack and pouring the final cup of coffee into him on the run. Lyle was outdoors before him.

"Ain't that a feazer!" Lyle cried out angrily. "That he's wandered off just when the boss is gone. If it'd happened when he was home, it wouldn't been so worse."

All these speculations, however, were cast aside as they got outside and began to read the sign. At first they thought that Helen had noticed the colt was gone and had gone to search for him, but a second thought made this supposition of no value, for Dunn's objection covered it.

"No; she'd have told us, first off, an' not gone on a still hunt her own self."

They began to unravel the sign methodically. These men, skilled in following sign, soon realized what it all meant. Lyle declared it crisply.

"They've stole Sunshine and Helen. Saddle, Herm, an' ride!"

"I'm with you," Ols Brownlew chimed in. "I c'n do a man's part till I drop. That's all any one c'n do."

Ten minutes later, their saddle pockets stuffed with hurriedly prepared and caught-up grub, the three took the trail of the horsemen. One thing they had to guide them—the small, clean-cut tracks of Sunshine.

"That'll give 'em away," Lyle told the other two, pointing to the colt's tracks. "We c'n follow that sign t' the devil an' back."

"They won't leave it plain like that always," Dunn said. "It's no band of amachures, and I'm bankin' they spring a trick or two later on."

The trail left the outlands, made toward Encinal, then doubled north, and came out onto a well-traveled road. It went up a long grade, that ended in a place where the bed rock came to the surface and the going was hard, flinty. There they saw where a wagon had come along, and they found where it had gone on toward Twin Tanks and the railroad. They found the hoof marks of the horses they had been following leading off the bed rock to one side, and the marks of a colt's hoofs. The trail swung south now, and at sundown they were headed in a way that made the two men think that their quarry was on the way toward the border and the Big Thicket country.

"I told you this trail was plumb easy," Bert Lyle was rejoicing. "We've

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pressed them so hard they haven't had time t' stop. They won't do any harm t' Helen. They'll probably ask ransom; it's some band of Mex raiders. Bet they don't even know what kind of a colt they've stolen."

"Then why did they pick him out o' all the colts on the Pear, an' why is that colt ahaid of us able t' keep up this gait all day; he must be an iron hoss a'ready," Herm Dunn put in.

Ols Brownlew said nothing. The loyal lad was weary, but grimly determined to show himself a man in action, if he was a boy in years.

"Look! There's a colt now!" and Lyle pointed.

A colt, weary and wabbly, was to be seen on a rise of land ahead. They spurred for it and came up to it. It was not Sunshine, but it was a colt of his age. It was just a common, wiry colt, leg-weary, exhausted.

The sign of the men they were after had split and raveled out, too, they found upon close inspection.

"Tricked!" Lyle exclaimed. "They must've switched to that wagon on that bald spot on the Twin Tanks Trail——"

"But the colt?" Dunn objected.

"Might've piled him into that wagon and——"

Ols Brownlew had given them the idea they needed. Now they turned about and started over the weary route again. But their horses were not equal to speed. They had been kept going all day with the fugitives, it seemed, just ahead. For once Herm and Bert, veterans that they were, had been outguessed in a game of trailin'. The three were practically afoot, sixty miles from where the trail had been split on them, and they groaned as they thought that they must ride slowly, camp somewhere, and then make slower and slower progress back to where they had lost the sign of the Twin Tanks Trail. And when they arrived there they would still have horses under them all but dead in their tracks, horses with no lift of life to them, horses upheld by the stern will of their riders, not by the living blood and nerve of vital force yet unused!

CHAPTER XV.

EL MORRO.

WITH much jingle the band of El Morro came over the last ridge and viewed from afar the peaceful scene at the Ranch of the Pear. It was farther north than El Morro raided usually, but the Señor Upson had told him that it would be safe, as he, Upson, would create a diversion that would take all the ranch's defenders away on another quest.

Twirling up the waxed tips of his little dandy mustache and shaking his head till the bells on the rim of his high-crowned hat jingled again, the border chieftain laughed and then pointed out to his lieutenants what should be done.

"Throw down the fences," he spoke to them in Spanish. "Start the *manada* quietly and keep them together. There is no one at home, since we knew Señor Keever is gone and his vaqueros also."

They rode down into the vale confidently and began work. They had done but a little when the flat, snappy report of a rifle came to their ears and one of the lieutenants of El Morro leaped from his saddle clutching his trouser seat and yelling. The wounded man's horse next fell, all in a heap!

"Sangre de Diablo!" El Morro shouted. "Some hombre, then remains. Work, then, the more quickly."

He began to throw lead at the house, from which the rifle continued to talk. Perhaps that first brace of shots was an accident, but at least Ma Potter hit no more of the crew, although she made sharp practice of it. They got the fence cut and rounded up the horses, all inside the fence as they had been left the night before. Lyle and Dunn had not

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned them loose that morning in their excitement. The wounded man mounted behind a friend at first; later he would ride a Pear mare. The stricken horse was left, innert. It only took a few moments for that group of skilled raiders to do the trick. Ma Potter, on the doorstep, brandished the rifle and called for them to "come back and fight like men." She saw them go over the farther ridge, yelling like Indians as they hazed the mares onward. The colts they left, as too weak to stand the hurried trip. El Morro, urging them on, turned for a shot at the plucky woman, but she replied by a bullet that cut a bell from his hat's rim. Then he was gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEELOCK DENIES.

SWEEPING south at a goodly lope, Billy Keever covered the ground toward the Wheelock ranch without delay. He was rather impatient because he had been called away from home, but the chance to get the Wheelock bunch of mares was too good to miss. Wheelock's was about forty miles from Encinal, and Keever had picked out his best trail horse for the trip. At sunset he was swinging down before the Wheelock *casa blanca,* where Frank Wheelock and his home-base hands were swapping lies as they rested up from the labors of the day.

"Why, I ain't sent you no note," Wheelock told him, puzzled.

"Is this a new kind of a joke, gettin' a man t' ride fifty miles for nothing?" Keever demanded, a bit on the prod.

"I'm tellin' you I ain't sent you no note. I ain't got a mare t' sell," he added a bit truculently.

"Is this your hand of write?" inquired Keever, extending to him the note.

"Not by a jugful! All I c'n write is my name," he informed, rather shamefaced over confessing to this lack, not unusual with the old-timers. "I get my girl, Mandy, t' write all my billies-doo, and they're few and seldom."

Keever studied the note and began to think. "It may be just a joke and then—but say, Wheelock, take this horse of mine and give me something to slam between my laigs, will you?"

"You're goin' t' light down an' eat a snack."

"I'll eat in the saddle. Give me a hoss that can go, an' grub—I begin t' think that some one wanted me away from home so he c'd start something dirty with my back turned."

"All right, son. Hi, Manuel—Felicé—a hoss—and some of that fried side meat. Pronto!"

Ten minutes later Keever was hammering the trail toward Encinal with a game horse under him. He had shaken off, like magic, the fatigue of the long ride down. Man of iron that he was, he now called upon his horse for speed.

"We'll be in Encinal at midnight; home before the sun's up," he thought, as he was halfway to the town, but there his luck turned against him for the game Wheelock bay stepped into a hole and threw him and when Keever was again afoot, he caught the horse to find it lamed and limping badly.

The night was dark; there were no places near at which he could get a remount. Much as he disliked forcing the lame horse onward, Keever made him hobble. Every mile seemed a year long, and as he rode, Keever felt a rising flood of doubt and dread beating up against his heart.

"What is it that worries me so?" he asked himself. Then he thought of Helen and her merry ways and of the sturdy boy she had found for a companion.

"I wonder if anything's wrong with her," he thought to himself.

It was well after sunup that he came to Encinal. He wanted food and a horse.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He went to the town yard to make sure of the horse first. He battered on the door of the office shack, got out the wagon-yard keeper, left with him the Wheelock horse, and hired another nag. He started toward the Diamond Cat to get his snack of food. The place would be closed, but he counted upon getting into the bar and finding something cold. He was heavy-eyed for sleep, but plenty of food would help on that score, for food will make up, in part, for sleep, to the man in the open.

Keever rode to the rear of the Diamond Cat, swung down, and thrust the door open. A queer sight met his gaze. Instead of being dead and empty, the room was lively. A dozen men, strangers to Keever, were at the bar, being served thus early. One of them was saying to a young Mexican:

"When did you see Upson last?"

The Mexican made a sign for caution that Keever did not miss. It was the same Mexican that had given to him the note, signed with the name of Frank Wheelock.

Keever swept the evil-talking group w. h his eyes. He jerked out his call:

"Hi, you Mex that gave me that lyin' note!"

The voices stilled. The Mexican sought to cringe in behind a big, hulking fellow who scowled at Keever. The men were all strangers to Billy.

"Split that crowd! That oiler's mine!"

Keever's gun leaped forward. The crowd split apart.

"Walk right up here, Oily," Billy commanded as the slim-hipped man glanced on either side for an opening to escape.

He came forward grudgingly. Keever poked the gun into his ribs and demanded: "Who gave you that note?"

The red tongue of the Mexican, serpentlike, came out to wet his lips. He read death in the cold, chilly eyes of the horse tamer.

"Ah'm not eeble tell, señor; uno hombre to me she gave dhat hand of wreet——"

"That's all a lie," said Keever menacingly. "Spit it out, now," he commanded, jamming the gun's end deep under the ribs of the chattering peon.

"Ah'm tellin' señor—Ah'm goin' tell——"

"Tell, then!"

The Mexican glanced aside in fear, and then whispered: "Ah'm afreed dhose hombre, Señor Keever——"

"Outside, then, I'll protect you," Keever was beginning, when a Luger's staccato cut the silence and the Mexican pitched over backward. Keever fired at the big, hulking man as the assassin tried to throw his gun for a shot at the American. The big man doubled up, coughing. Keever swept them all with his gun and asked: "Who else?"

No one spoke. A laugh somewhere told him that he had lost his clew through the death of the young Mexican.

Keever started out of the door. He almost ran into Sheriff Bascombe, whom some one had awakened before time. He told the sheriff his version of the affair. The strangers, back at the bar, did not speak. Bascombe looked them over and seemed about to say something, when they all filed out of the rear door and began a stampede up behind the buildings.

"Who are they?" Keever asked of Bascombe.

"Don't ask me, son," answered the sheriff, stroking his beard. "Don't ask me.

"Then I won't, but I'll bet it's more of the shady bunch that you never spend any time catchin'. I'll clean you out of office one of these days when I ain't got anything else t' do, Bascombe," he retorted hotly.

"Have it your way, son," came back the sheriff, apparently relieved at the outcome of the incident nearest at hand.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All right, son." And with a cunning leer he added: "You did a good job on that big fellow. I think he's a spy for El Morro's band."

"Think! I'll bet you know, Bascombe. All right; I'm ridin'."

He went to the rear door. His horse was gone!

This angered Keever beyond measure. He started up the rear of the buildings himself now, running. He wanted to be at the wagon yard in a hurry. When he got there he found that the strange men had not been there, and he got into an argument, strangely protracted, with the wagon-yard keeper, who refused him another horse until he had paid for the one he had lost. Being legally responsible for the animal while it was under hire to him, Keever knew the man's demand was just. He paid for the horse, after wrangling over the sum asked, for the man kept up a running fire of talk over the incident and refused to be hurried. Then Keever tried to get another horse, but found there were none for hire.

Then Keever started for Whalen's place and took another hour in finding him and in getting a horse under him, as Whalen's horses were all out grazing on a little bit of land that Whalen owned close to town. Finally Keever had all arranged to his wish and started toward the Pear with a heavy heart.

Halfway there he saw some one riding toward him. At first Keever was puzzled to know what to make of the strange apparition. The horse came at a broken jog, staggeringly. The rider was like a bag of meal on the horse, but managed to keep on top somehow.

Then he saw what it really was—a woman, riding bareback and astride. The broken-gaited horse came weaving up to Keever who gasped out:

"Ma Potter—what's wrong?"

The game widow slid off the sweat-lathered horse, that collapsed. She began to pour out her tale.

"They've stolen Helen and Sunshine, and El Morro's band raided the Pear and made off with your whole *manada,* except the young colts. I shot one of them, but he got away, an' I hit his hoss. Lyle an' Herm Dunn are after them, hot-foot."

"Who did it?" Keever asked.

"Stole the gal and Sunshine? Well, I don't know, but who hates you?"

"Upson."

"You said it, boy!"

"I'll get him!" cried Keever.

Ma Potter asked to be left where she was, as the horse would recover the full use of his legs soon, she was sure. Keever confirmed this idea and left her, after she had assured him she could take care of herself, which he felt sure the plucky range woman could do.

Keever knew he had a long chase ahead of him. He rode back to town. He appealed, not to the crooked Sheriff Bascombe, but to the men like Whalen, who could be trusted. They began to gather soon, making for the Pear, where Keever had gone in advance.

When they arrived at the Pear it was midday. The delays, all slight, had been like pin pricks to Keever. He was raging for speed and action, but knew that in such a case the race is not always to the swift.

"I'll drum up every square man as I go and tell them t' ride for Red Buttes," he told Whalen, in charge of the posse he had told off to follow the horse thieves. "I'm goin' t' follow the crowd that's got my colt an' Miss McNulty."

He saw Whalen and his crowd sweep out over the last ridge, having made sure that the stolen *manada* had been driven that way, as Ma Potter had said. Now he picked up the trail of Ols Brownlew, Bert Lyle, and Herm Dunn, as they followed the sign of the kidnapers.

Keever had decided to follow that branch of the trail and to follow it to the end!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sign was easy to run. Keever followed it to where the Twin Tanks Trail came out onto the bald top of the bed rock. There he saw where the three friends had cut into the open country and was just starting to follow their sign, thinking they, of course, had not been fooled, when he saw them coming wearily back, dejected and with failing steeds under them.

In a few moments they were with him and had told their tale, and he had told them what had befallen him.

"You men go to the Bend an' buy fresh hosses or steal them or something. Ride t' Red Buttes and join Whalen's bunch," he ordered. "I'm goin' t' ride this sign."

"You ought t' have help on that trail," Herm Dunn objected.

"I've got all the help I need, *here,*" he said, loosening his guns in their holsters. "Adios!"

And he was gone, riding lightly, lifting his horse bit by bit to get him into the stride. For he had seen, on the other side of the bald spot, the marks of the wheels, and he felt that they were the wheels of the wagon that held the clew to the mystery that had proved so baffling.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESCUE.

HELEN's glimpse of the colt, tied at the wagon tail, was fleeting. A turn of the wagon put the colt out of line of vision for her. Then she knew they were on rocky going and soon the wagon was stopped. Many riders were about the wagon; voices were heard issuing low orders; riders clattered away. She heard the slithering vocables of "oilers" and 'Pache renegades. Then she was shoved back, blankets and all with her, until she was up right behind the seat of the wagon. She heard a struggle, a thumping and bumping on the bottom of the wagon, and then she heard Bart Upson's voice.

"All right, Vraine; tie his ankles with soft rawhide an' he'll stay. A colt'll ride easy as long's the wagon's in motion. Let him get used t' that hay he's on and he'll get over bein' scared."

Then the wagon started onward. Helen heard the men on the seat talking. She made out they were going toward Twin Tanks.

She worked the blankets aside. She had the gag loose, too, now. She could see the colt tied and lying on his side, in the wagon with her. It had taken three men to lift the big fellow into the wagon. He was quiet enough.

Helen whispered to him, and Sunshine pricked up his dainty ears and wabbled about till he could find her face. Then he nuzzled her and licked her cheeks.

"Sunshine!" she whispered. "We sure need help from somewhere, you an' I do. I wish Billy Keever would come, Sunny, don't you?"

The colt nickered, the sound of the wagon's heavy wheels drowning it out, almost. Helen heard it, however, and she felt his warm tongue on her cheek again.

"I guess no one'd think an outfit like this was holdin' a gal an' a colt," Upson was telling his pals. "I guess I doped this deal out t' win. I'll get half what El Morro makes on the mares an' a thousand from him for the gal, and we'll clean up big on the colt. Some rich deal!"

As the wagon jolted along, Helen felt to the full, the agony of body, mind, and spirit. Her bonds hurt her terribly. They had been tied with the skill of men accustomed to make knots that do not slip. These three had tied up too many colts and mares and stallions to make a miss in tying up this girl upon whom, in their eyes, so much depended. The wagon shook her woefully, for she had nothing under her to take the jar off.

The girl's mind was in agony because

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she knew that Keever's beautiful colt, his pride, was being taken from him by skilled thieves. She knew what Keever thought of the colt, and she knew how his heart would bleed over his loss.

The girl's spirit, too, rebelled against the thought suggested by Upson's threat of selling her to El Morro, the cur of the outlands, the pariah of all the border regions. She had heard tales of the renegade's evil deeds and knew that once in his power, she would have to abandon all hope. Once in a while the colt was taken out and permitted to exercise, to keep his legs in shape; she, also, was relieved of pain—then rebound and gagged.

Darkness came; the dawn followed; they went on and on. Once she heard them change horses. Whispered, mysterious orders were given. Again girl and colt were given a chance to exercise, then placed in the wagon again. Then she heard a train pass; after a time another.

She felt they were following a trail that led beside the railroad. She heard a long freight train rumble past; then a passenger train split the night in twain.

Dawn came. The wagon stopped.

She heard Upson say: "Twin Tanks; Gillian's special ought t' be here in two hours. We'll eat, get the colt out, and let him have a nip o' grass and water. Keep the girl close, now, and don't make any fox passes. Make sure her gag is on tight an' cover her with the blankets."

The Gillian special swung around the farther bend, and the brakes squealed as Twin Tanks came into view.

Sam Jackson, the saddle-colored and alert handler, was first off. He placed the step for Gillian, the millionaire sportsman, who came next, followed by Yates Gregory, king of trainers.

They saw before them a trio of hard-bitten men, who had among them a colt, haltered and marked in a way that made them all gasp. Off to one side a bit was a covered wagon, tail board toward them.

"The dead spit of Sunnymoat, but there's some difference in his build," Gregory gasped out.

"Sure is old Sunnymoat's kid," Jackson sang out admiringly.

Gillian was silent, but his eyes were greedy. Every drop of the great sire's blood to him was precious as gold, and he was like a miser in desiring it. He coveted this colt greatly.

"How'd this come about?" was his crisp query. Not wishing to seem too eager in advance of bargaining, he cast his eyes negligently off down the track, beside which the trail into town ran for some miles. He saw a cloud of dust off up there a ways—a cloud of dust that laid back, showing that the rider under it was headed toward Twin Tanks.

"Well, I'm not saying about that, but we caught him down in the Wild Hoss Range near where Sunnymoat was at," Upson began to explain.

"I thought he was caught in the Black Cañon Range," Gillian objected.

"Well, he was in the Wild Hoss Range, because we trailed him there," answered Upson a bit uneasily. "He got back t' the Black Cañon range afterward."

"Yes? Well, however that may be, he's a Sunnymoat colt, I admit."

"But is your title to him good?" Gregory asked.

"Surest thing!"

"Do you know the colt's mother?"

"No; wild mare; all those Wild Hoss Range mares are hardy an' good."

Gillian for some reason was attracted to that dust cloud, now nearing fast.

"What do you want for him?" he asked, reaching for his check book.

"Five thousand, cold."

Their eyes engaged for a few seconds. Sam Jackson eyed the colt greedily. The youngster was plainly nervous

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and afraid of these men. Sam yearned to get hands on the colt and perk him up.

"I've taken longer chances than that on five thousand," Gillian said, opening the check book.

"I'd rather have cash," Upson snapped out.

"Oh, I guess my check's good——"

"Yes, but banks aren't thick around here, an' a five thousand check'd scare them stiff," Upson came back laughingly.

"I've got just a few hundred with me; better take the check. You can get it cashed somehow. Otherwise you'll have to wait till I can get the money in cash," he added with decision.

The dust cloud was very close now.

"All right," said the outlaw grudgingly. "Give us the cash, what you've got."

"I'll give you that as a bonus for taking my check," said Gillian, beginning to write.

Gregory reached out his hand to take the halter rope. Sam Jackson chortled with glee. Sunshine danced back.

"It's my colt," Gillian said, handing the check to Upson, who now heard the drumming of hoofs as the dust cloud split to let out a horse and rider. The horse was failing fast, but still coming; the rider had the reins in his teeth, and two good guns rode high as he leaped from the horse in full stride, landing upright and balancing on the balls of springy feet.

"A holdup!" Gillian spoke sharply, and his hands went up, the check book dropping one way, the golden pen the other.

"Holdup nothing!" Upson let out, beginning to back away, getting behind Gillian, Yates, and Sam Jackson.

"I'll take that colt," the holdup man said to Gregory, who at once dropped the halter rope. Keever strode forward. His own horse, weaving, fell over sidewise, breathing convulsively. Keever crowded after Upson and pals. He tried to get around Gillian and Gregory and Jackson, but they, in their fright, kept in his way and Upson, seeing that Keever could not shoot promptly, made a break for the covered wagon. He was in it before he could be headed off, and the other two swung to the seat as he started the horses. Keever threw a shot that sent Upson's hat spinning off his head. People began to run from the railroad shack and the stores. Upson drew the horses down to a stop.

"I bought that colt with my check," Gillian said, now regaining part of his self-control. He perceived that the holdup man had business strictly with the three natives, and none with him.

"Well, that check'll never be spent," said Keever. "I don't want t' sell that colt; they stole it from me. I'll get your check," he added, striding toward the wagon. He spoke sharply to Upson.

"Give me that check of Gillian's."

Upson reached toward his pocket—his vest pocket, but Keever cut him short with: "No; you've got an arm holster; I see the corner o' that check peeping out from your hat brim—take off your hat."

Upson jerked off his hat and the oblong of paper fluttered down. Keever put his foot on it.

"That'll never be cashed," he said to Gillian over his shoulder. "An' that colt, he's mine."

"What's wrong here?" a much bowlegged man, who came running up, demanded. He had on a marshal's star.

"This man's holdin' us up," Upson charged. He had seen that star a long way off and thought he could work a game to hold Keever's plans in check.

"You cain't run no blazers that a way in this man's town," the man with the star began to splutter. But he did not reach for his guns. Perhaps those of Billy Keever looked too capable.

"You'll keep off t' one side; I had one—two bad deals from the sheriff

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down t' Encinal Bend, an' I ain't puttin' much weight on anything but my own law," Keever spoke sharply. "These coyotes not only stole my colt, but kidnaped a nice li'le girl. They've got t' answer t' me."

The colt, unruffled now, had begun to nose about. He found the dangling halter rope a thing to play with and jerked it about. He nosed at Sam Jackson's neck and that warm-hearted negro yelled with real fright.

Upson knew that part of his game was lost. He trusted now to getting Billy tangled up with the law, while he drove off with the girl. If he could get away before this dull-witted town marshal awoke to his real game, he might get off with plenty of money yet, and at least half of his revenge effected. He could come back to the Pear after the colt again later, and could even kill Keever from ambush.

"All right; if there's no backbone in the law here, I'll drive out," Upson said, clucking to the horses, that strained at the tugs.

The dull-witted marshal was puzzled. Something was going on, over his head. The special car of the rich Easterner was to be seen; the guns of Keever were out; the three Eastern men, the owner, trainer and handler, had their hands up. Upson and his pals were grinning now, the other two taking a tip from Upson to pass it off easily, if possible.

The colt, dancing about, came to the rear of the wagon.

"It's all over—all over that colt," Gillian spoke to the dull-witted marshal. "Each of them claims it, and I'm trying to buy it."

"Whose colt is it?" asked the marshal.

"He's mine," Keever affirmed quickly. He was not losing sight of the three killers on the wagon seat. Under the overhang of the top they might work some scheme—pass a gun behind them to one of their number who would shoot, say, if he let the wagon move forward a little, so that the bow end of the cover would give them a bit of concealment.

"He was mine, but I sold him t' Mr. Gillian," Upson spoke up with equal confidence.

"I raised him," Keever began. But the marshal had an idea at last.

"He ain't branded. Who's got proof that he belongs t' any one by rights?"

"I brought him here, off the range," Upson said.

"He was at my ranch when he was stolen," Keever insisted. Then, to Upson: "If you start those hosses, I'll shoot you. I'm goin' t' look into that wagon before you go."

"You talk pretty brash, young feller," the marshal objected.

"I've got grounds," came back Keever, jerking a gun over toward him, then back to cover the men on the wagon seat as the marshal flinched.

"Yes, I guess," the marshal answered, his voice quavering. "But who does the colt belong t'?"

"Easy boys; we'll get out of this yet," Upson whispered to the other two out of a mouth corner.

"He's mine; he'll come when I call him; that'll prove it," Keever declared. Then he spoke: "Sunshine!"

The good colt lifted up his head. He had been nosing at the rear of the wagon, under the flap.

"If he's your colt, call him," the marshal said to Upson.

"That's no test," Upson flung at him. "A fool colt might go t' any loco nut that calls him."

"Not that colt," Keever flared back with, then, to the colt: "Sunshine, Sunshine, boy, come here an' get some sugar."

"Thinks he's a reg'lar lady's pet," Upson replied, laughing coarsely.

The colt, however, did not come. He nosed into the rear of the wagon. Upson, looking back, suddenly took up the whip and jerked on the reins. Keever,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taken somewhat aback, ordered him to drop the reins. Vraine and Seltzer, tensed, nudged Upson, who growled something to them.

"Here, Sunshine," Keever commanded.

The colt, instead, nickered and plunged forward, neck outstretched into the interior of the wagon.

Upson's whip descended, the wagon started!

Sunshine backed off, a bunch of cloth in his mouth—the gag of Helen, that he had been nuzzling, in the effort to find her cheek. He had, in fact, heard her choked whispers behind the gag as she had lain under the heavy blankets, hearing the words that told her that she was on the verge of being driven off and taken from Billy, just as he had appeared, almost, it seemed, by a miracle.

As the good colt backed away, kicking up his small heels and nickering his love note, Helen screamed. Keever leaped before the moving team and then the three on the seat were erect, their guns streaming lead and Keever, erect, fanned death into their faces!

Three forms pitched out of the wagon, and remained down. Keever, as the horses plunged over him, collapsed.

The dull-witted marshal, running around and around, called for help.

Gillian, Jackson, and Yates Gregory remembered at last to take their hands down.

People came swarming up, surrounding the tragic group.

Helen, her hair streaming over her shoulders, came over the tail board of the wagon as some one caught the horses' bridle-reins and checked them. Sam Jackson, coming alive tardily, caught Sunshine's lead strap.

The girl had no eyes for any one but Keever. She raced to him, and took his head into her lap as she sat on the ground. She rocked back and forth, holding his head close against her, moaning: "Billy; oh, poor Billy Keever!"

He opened one blue-gray eye and sighed. "Is it you, Helen? Then I've saved you for Ols Brownlew; he's a good kid, all right, Helen, h'le gal. Good-by; it's gettin' dark——"

The dull-witted marshal seemed to realize something, for he ceased to gyrate and shouted: "If they had a girl kidnaped that a way they might've stole a colt; who knows."

"Give you time and you'll generate an idea," Gillian remarked dryly, reaching down to pick up the check he had made out in favor of Upson. He began to shred it to bits.

"Oh, Billy, poor Billy Keever," Helen moaned, patting the head in her lap.

Keever sighed, and his form seemed to stiffen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAUGHT IN THE PASS.

SWEEPING down-country, gathering recruits as they rode, Bert Lyle, Herm Dunn, and Whalen, heading the pursuers, kept to the trail of El Morro. The Wheelock outfit joined in the hunt, and the united bands raced for the Big Thicket, toward which it was evident the border outlaw was heading. The pursuers rejoiced the third day, for they found three mares abandoned, and they took this as a sign that they were gaining.

Secure in the knowledge that they had made splendid time, and feeling that the Big Thicket, with its secure retreats was not far away, El Morro squared away to make the entrance to Southern Pass, a long, easy-rolling grade between hills. Once through there, he would be safe.

The bandits reached this pass just before dusk. As they topped the last rise, with the driven mares bunched ahead, the *manada* was seen suddenly to split, half going to each side.

Through the cleft in the horse herd

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a crowd of riders came, the long yell sounding as they rode, guns out and spitting.

Caught in the pass, the Mexicans had barely time to draw before the avalanche was upon them. But the Mexicans, thus cornered, began to fight bitterly.

The hail of death swept the pass, shuttling back and forth.

The sudden dusk came. Still the pass was gashed with flaming death as the contending forces, now hiding behind rocks, fought on and on.

Then came a final charge, a sudden burst of terrific gun fire, yells, moans, and then silence.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP.

PROPPED up in bed in the Twin Tanks Hotel, Billy listened to Willis Gillian.

"I'm satisfied that better polo ponies can be raised out here than I can raise East. I want my different enterprises to make a fair profit, and I want a partner in a polo pony ranch out here. Will you go in with me?"

"On what terms?"

"Liberal terms. I admit that your title to the colt Sunshine is perfect. I understand that, under range law, he is an unbranded son of an unbranded mother, caught on the open range. You can prove that you caught him, by the testimony of your ranch workers down on the Pear, and by that of friends who have seen him there, but did not know what he is. I can see, by looking at the colt, that the cross of the thoroughbred with these Wild Horse Range mares will make a foundation stock for ideal polo pony stock. It will take time to work up the stock and make it famous enough to make sales to the clubs in the East, but with my reputation as a breeder and your skill in handling horses out here in this range country, we lose nothing by making the effort. Come, I'm used to doing business in a hurry when I find a man worth while to deal with. I like you, Keever. You've got sand and brains and know horses and the horse game out here. Let's start a little company of our own. I'll let you put in Sunshine at five thousand dollars, your ranch and brood stock at what you wish——"

"But I may not have any brood stock; remember I was raided?" Billy reminded him.

"Let that fall out as it may. I'll let every mare stand for one hundred dollars, and the ranch itself, if as you've described it, at ten thousand dollars. I'll put in dollar for dollar, against those values, and we'll have capital enough to make a fine start. I'll put in my polo stock that's East, too, at a fair valuation, and we'll go fifty-fifty, you to have five thousand dollars a year as manager. I will find the market for all good polo ponies you raise."

"If I knew what had happened to my mares an' Lyle and Dunn and my other friends that went after them, I'd feel almost happy," Keever replied. "Those big figures sound nice, but they make my haid go round! But I'll take you up, Mr. Gillian. For a man that lets himself be a citizen East of the Mississippi, you're one white hombre, sir."

Their handclasp settled the bargain.

Helen came in with a cooling drink for her patient.

"You'll be glad when Ols shows up; I hope nothing happens to him down after those hoss thieves," Billy said.

"You drink this; let Ols take care of himself," she answered rather shortly. Gillian went out.

CHAPTER XX.

HAPPINESS ALL AROUND.

FOUR days later, Billy Keever and Helen, leaning over the bars of the little pasture lot at Twin Tanks that they had rented to keep Sunshine in, pending Billy's recovery, watched the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good colt's antics as he trotted or loped about. A puncher that Billy had hired, kept day and night watch over the colt now, until such time as Billy was able to ride.

"I'd feel better if I'd heard from Bert Lyle and Herm Dunn," Keever was saying.

"Well, there comes Ols Brownlew, now," she told him, pointing up the trail along the railroad tracks, where the grinning lad was riding toward them at a harum-scarum pace, slatting his pony along delightedly.

"I'll bet you're glad to see Ols," Billy said, as Ols swung down and went to the girl and kissed her, shouting: "Gee, Helen, I've got news. We smashed El Morro at the aidge of the Big Thicket, got all the mares, but a few back, got home and——"

"Any of our men hurt?" Billy asked anxiously.

"Not much; a few scratches. Mostly on Herm Dunn. Ma Potter'n he are engaged! And on my way back, Helen, I stopped off at our ranch and dad, he agreed to what we've been asking. He says I'm pretty young yet, but as long as you want it and are willing—to help me study so I'll get through school quick, he'll agree, so it's all——"

Billy started to stroll off. He did not want to hear that, somehow. He watched the colt frisking about in the pasture lot. Somehow the world did not seem so bright. Of course Ols was a good boy and Helen might prefer a young fellow, and all that, but she had been nursing him now for several days, and he had grown accustomed to the touch of her cool, soft hands and to the sound of her low, sweet voice and—of course——

"Billy," she called. "Ols is going to put his horse out."

Ols was riding away, whooping, slatting his horse along. He was headed for the hotel barns.

"Let him go; that's all right," Billy said, vaguely unhappy. "Me, I'll visit Sunshine; you go an' make Ols happy; he's probably lonesome for you."

He got to the pasture fence and hung over it, suddenly weak and tired. He had been afoot too much, perhaps that day. It had seemed nice to be about in the sunshine of outdoors with the girl talking and laughing beside him. Now Ols had come back, bubbling with youth and happiness.

Keever felt two arms about his waist; heard a soft, low voice.

"Billy! Ols has told me his dad had agreed to something that makes us happy. He's been wanting to have his cousin Lena, that lives with them, go to the mission school, when he and I go. Lena's a nice girl and Ols is sweet on her. They're goin' to be married when they're old enough."

"They're goin' to be married!" Keever exclaimed rather thick voiced.

"Yes; I've been in his secret ever since he came to Ma Potter's t' visit first, an' he and Lena are sweethearts."

"They are!"

"Yes, ain't it nice t' be sweethearts, Billy?" she asked, snuggling up to him as Sunshine came over to see them.

"I think it is," he agreed, finding his arm stealing around her slim waist. "Yes, it is—and if you were older, I'd—I'd——" he stopped, hardly daring to complete it.

"Oh, yes, would you, Billy?" she asked, as Sunshine nosed in between their faces.

"Sure would," he answered almost breathlessly.

"It'll only take me two years to finish school, and then I'll be almost seventeen——"

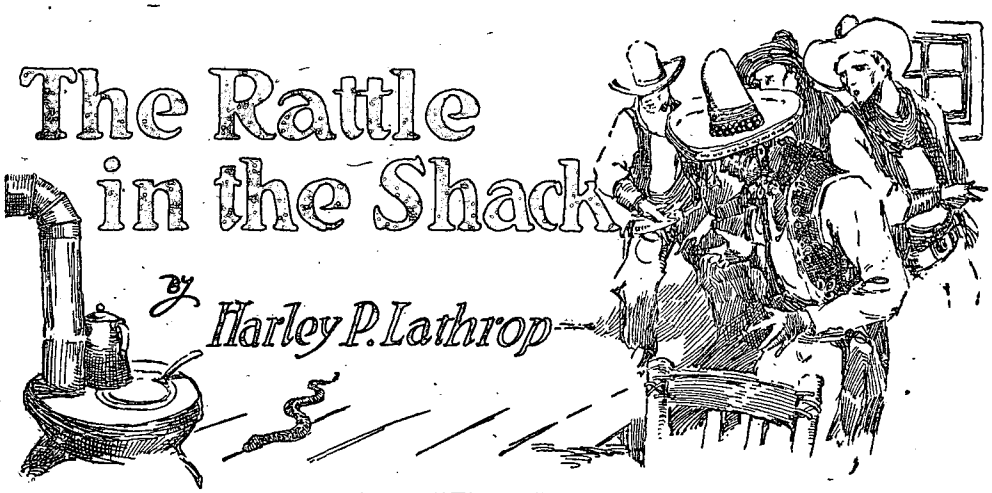
"And an engagement of say a year would make you almost eighteen?" he suggested, lifting her face for a kiss.

"Yes, Billy, I love you, Billy Keever!"

Sunshine? The rascal was begging for a share of their kiss of betrothal—and somehow he got it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rattle in the Shack



by Harley P. Lathrop

Author of "The Kid's Gift," etc.

THE Carancahua section had made a fall sale of beef steers. It was a community transaction, a number of owners throwing in together. Old Flint Aubrey, who owned the T Y T brand, and at whose pens the delivery was taking place, had the largest number of cattle in the sale. Alf Commons, a sensible, slow-spoken, gray-bearded man, was next, and one or two others had almost as many as he. Some few there were who had but a scant dozen or so.

The sale had been made subject to conditions and terms that were rather unusual. The Carancahua section was approximately fifty miles above the border, and a Mexican named Sancho Valero had bought the steers with the intention of reselling them below the line. Before he purchased, however, he had made it known that he planned to peddle them in different mining towns for immediate slaughter. These towns could absorb only a few cars a month; therefore, he insisted that if the deal was made the cattle should be rebranded with his brand and pastured near their home, subject to his call—a car or two at a time, as desired. He agreed to pay a reasonable pasture rent and to furnish two men together with a string of horses, to look after them.

The Carancahua ranchers were anxious to sell, so when Flint Aubrey offered the use of his lower cañon pasture in which to hold the steers, the deal was concluded.

There was one other circumstance somewhat out of the ordinary pertaining to the sale. The sellers had come to a unanimous agreement that the cattle must be paid for in cold cash as soon as rebranded. Their reasons were good and sufficient, and came from a rather intimate knowledge of Mexican tactics—Sancho Valero's in particular.

Sancho was a bird of ill repute on the American side. All through the years of turmoil below the line he had turned his hand to banditry and robbery and had justly earned the reputation of being a sly, cunning rascal who balked at nothing.

When law and order were restored, Sancho blossomed forth as a cattle trader. On several occasions since, he had proven he was not averse to crooked dealing. More than once he had purchased a small bunch of steers from some trusting rancher, paying for them by check, which, after a time, was re-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned marked "insufficient funds." With the cattle wearing his brand and a bona fide bill of sale in his possession, the Mexican was in a position to laugh at the gullible seller. So, in demanding payment in cash, the Carancahua ranchers were simply safeguarding their own interests.

When acquainted with the ranchers' decision, Sancho had at first demurred, but after a little vain arguing he had given in. Out of pique he had brought with him a bag full of currency in bills of small denominations, and now the count having been taken and the cattle rebranded, Sancho was paying for them. He was standing near the pen surrounded by a circle of interested owners. A little way out on the prairie a crew of hands were holding the freshly branded cattle.

"Twenty-two thousand, twenty-three thousand," the Mexican droned, carefully counting the last stack of currency from the bottom of the bag. He handed the money over to Flint Aubrey, who was acting as principal. "Eet ees correct, ees eet not, Señor Aubrey?" he asked.

"To a dot," the rancher acknowledged crisply, after recounting the money. Then Flint turned to his brother ranchmen. "We may as well whack this cash up right now and have it done with," he suggested.

The owners crowded about a suit case in which Flint had stowed the money. Each had a slip in his hand on which was figured the total amount of his share. But before Flint started apportioning out the money, gray-bearded Alf Commons came through with a sensible proposal:

"It seems foolish," he said in his slow, thoughtful way, "for each one of us to lug off a bundle of cash. It will mean every one will have to make a special trip to Valdez to-morrow to deposit it in the bank. Why not let Flint send the entire sum in by stage to-morrow morning and put it all to his credit. Then he can give each owner a check now for his share and we can mail the checks into the bank at our convenience."

Flint demurred at first, saying that he did not feel like assuming the responsibility for so great an amount of money, but these objections were laughed off. He was worth many times the amount in the suit case, and to date had proven fully competent to take care of his own. So at last, under concentrated pressure, he yielded.

This matter settled, he turned to Sancho. "If you care to go along with your herd and see them safe in pasture, I'll have an extra horse saddled," he said. "You'll have to sleep out to-night, though. They won't make it much more than halfway before dark catches them."

Sancho, who, during the discussion over the disposition of the money had been standing outside the ring of owners eying the contents of the suit case with a half regretful, half speculative look, shook his head.

"I tought maybe I go, but I haf change my mind." Then he explained: "Thees morning my partner weeth the two vaqueros who are to look after thee steers haf left for this place weeth their horses. To-night they weel camp at the Cold Wells. I weesh to see them, señor, and geeve thee vaqueros some orders. Eet ees best that I leave for Cold Wells at once."

Flint nodded, and then, struck by a sudden thought, said: "If you want, Sancho, I can send a man along with you to pilot your outfit in here across country. If your partner don't know the lay of the land, he'll likely keep to the roads and be an extra day getting through."

With a gesture expressive of thanks, the Mexican waved the offer aside. "Eet weel not be necessary," he said. "My partner haf at one time work in thees section. He ees the Señor Tanlow—Beeg Ike I theenk you call heem."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Several of the cattlemen nodded, a slight expression of distaste showing on their faces. One or two of the older hands who were loitering about guffawed outright. They remembered Big Ike well, though it was seven or eight years since he had left those parts.

He had drifted into the Carancahua country from no one knew where. He sought work as a cow hand. His ability in that particular line was mediocre in the extreme, but he proved a wizard at accumulating pay checks, nevertheless. Poker was his medium. After a very short period of work on the range he had with his winnings opened up a saloon and gambling house in Valdez. He played for, and solicited the cowboy trade, and rumor had it that if he could not obtain their earnings by fair means, he would not hesitate over a resort to foul. Many cases of hijacking and robbery were laid at his door. Still, so adroit was he in hiding positive evidence, that nothing incriminating could be proven against him. Many methods of ridding the section of his presence were discussed, but it remained for a gang of practical jokers to prove his undoing.

Big Ike suffered from a peculiar complex. He possessed an inherent dread, a craven fear of reptiles. Snakes in particular he abhorred. He was courageous otherwise, possessed nerve a plenty, but the sight of anything that crawled, turned him into an abject coward.

A puncher with a perverted sense of humor started the ball rolling. Unmercifully skinned in a card game by Big Ike, he appeared the next night and with malicious intent, deposited a small garter snake on the bar. The big man went all to pieces, and that commenced a steady persecution by disgruntled losers. The Buck brothers furnished the finale.

Claiming to have been drugged and robbed by Big Ike, they left town swearing vengeance. They returned after a three days' scouring of the prairie and turned loose from a sack a half hundred well-primed rattlers in Big Ike's place. This was the last straw. He sold out shortly after and left the country.

Whether Sancho was acquainted with his partner's reason for shaking the dust of Valdez from his feet, or whether he even knew of the peculiar kink in Big Ike's makeup, is a question. Certainly he gave no sign, but in a rather preoccupied way he bade each different owner farewell and, climbing into his flivver, headed south.

After Sancho's departure, Flint suggested that the owners accompany him, Flint, to the ranch house while he wrote out the checks. They had gained the gallery before Flint recalled that the Mexican's steers were still being held on the prairie, waiting word to start for the cañon pasture. He glanced over the group that was with him, thinking that perhaps some cow hand had accompanied the owner he worked for and that word could be sent by him. There were none but owners present, however. Flint was about to excuse himself and ride out to the herd himself, when a girl appeared at the farther end of the wide hall that ran lengthwise of the ranch house. It was his daughter, Bess Aubrey, and she was dressed for riding.

Old Flint's eyes rested on her with a look of affection. "I wish you would lope out and start the herd along, Bess," he said. Then, as an afterthought he added: "Tell Cleve Owens to drop out after they get the cattle through the middle pasture gate and come on back to the ranch. I want to see him."

The girl smiled and nodded. "I think I'll go a ways with the herd myself," she said as she passed through the door. "I'll come back with Cleve."

The look of approval that had brightened Flint's eyes as he followed the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

figure of his daughter, vanished, and they hardened. He opened his mouth, but closed it again with a snap. Whatever was on his tongue he had decided not to say it in the presence of his neighbors.

It was nearing sundown, and the different ranchers having received their checks, had long since departed, when Cleve Owens and Bess drew up at the gate of the T Y T barn corral. Bending from his saddle, the man drew back the latch bar and, urging his horse against the heavy gate, forced it open. With a murmured word of thanks the girl rode through, dismounting by a watering trough which flanked one corner of the barn. Presently, after latching the gate, the man followed and swung to the ground beside her. He reached for the off strap at which she was tugging.

"Never mind unsaddling, Bess. I'll attend to it. We're late enough as it is."

She thanked him with a look from a pair of deep blue eyes and crinkled up her face prettily in a sort of a don't-care look. Bess Aubrey was a mighty attractive girl—resembled her mother, old-timers who knew, averred. And she was competent as well. Since her mother's death some years before, she had assumed full charge of the T Y T household.

"Much obliged, Cleve," she said and, letting herself through another gate, hurried up the path that led to the ranch house.

Leisurely and with a grace and ease that bespoke long practice, Cleve, after loosing the girth, swung the heavy stock saddles to the topmost bar of the corral. Then, with meticulous care, he washed and rubbed dry the sweated backs of both horses and turned them loose in a small pasture behind the barn. While he was engaged in spreading the wet blankets across a rude drying rack, Flint Aubrey appeared coming down the path from the direction of the ranch house. Flint was a stocky, gray-eyed man, forceful of manner, abrupt of speech, and with a dominant personality. He was reputed to be as hard as his name would imply, but a fair man withal. And like most men of such character, he never minced words, but invariably drove straight at the heart of the matter.

After entering the corral, he waited until Cleve had arranged the blankets on the rack to his entire satisfaction, then beckoned the cowboy to him. Cleve walked across to where the older man stood, silent and uncompromising.

"I have decided," Flint began with his usual curt incisiveness as Cleve stopped, "that your period of usefulness at the T Y T has ended. Your time is up day after to-morrow, and if you will come to the house after supper, I will have your check ready. In the morning you can start for the cañon pasture and fix a few gaps in the fence there. In that way you can put in the balance of your time, and it won't be necessary for you to come back to the ranch. You can ride one of our horses and turn it loose in Valdez or wherever you stop. It'll come back home."

A flush showing dully under his sun-tanned skin was the only evidence that this summary dismissal came as an unlooked-for and unwelcome surprise to the cowboy.

Cleve was a tall, dark-eyed young fellow with a likable face that was fashioned in strong lines. A close student of character would readily have deduced that it needed only a touch here and there from the scalpel of that master molder, Adversity, to fashion it into a countenance as ruggedly determined as that of the man facing him. You could see that a stubborn, unyielding determination was characteristic from the grim manner in which his mouth line tightened at Flint's words.

"Understand this," Flint continued, before Cleve had a chance to reply—"it is not because your work is unsatisfac-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory. You are as good a man as ever handled cattle for me. But as a prospective son-in-law you won't do. I don't aim to have any cow hand ride my coat tails into the business. You have been seeing altogether too much of Bess lately, so I am taking time by the forelock."

Flint, though not aware of it himself, was discriminating rather pointedly when he declared he did not wish his daughter to marry a cowboy. The truth was that he did not want her to marry anybody. He was possessed of a sort of a fierce paternal jealousy which, since her mother died and Bess had assumed full charge of the household, had grown rather than diminished. Flint was accustomed to getting what he desired, and he wanted Bess solely to himself. It was not that he disliked Cleve so much, any one else in this particular position would have fared the same.

For a moment Cleve looked angrily at the older man, his whole frame tensed, and plainly it was only by a supreme effort that he held himself in check. He stood several seconds thus before he mastered his inclination to speak, then he shrugged and turned in the direction of the bunk house.

He prepared for supper in morose silence. There was but one other hand present, the balance being with the cattle, and he was eating when Cleve came in. Until he had finished, he did not notice the other's air of dejection. But when he did, jumping at conclusions, he ventured a little jibe.

"What's the trouble, old-timer?" he asked. "Have to ride back alone?"

Cleve shook his head. "Fired," was his laconic explanation.

The other whistled softly, but forebore to question further. This was a matter beyond jest, and he knew that later on he would learn the details, no doubt. If he didn't—his sympathy was with Cleve just the same—winter was just around the hill.

For an hour or so after finishing supper Cleve fussed about the bunk house gathering up and sorting out his possessions. About seven thirty he took the path that led up to the ranch house.

Flint and his daughter were sitting on the gallery, and the air was surcharged with a sort of electric tension, as if a storm had recently taken place. Flint nodded curtly to Cleve, got to his feet, and ushered him into the big living room where his desk sat.

Few words passed between them. The rancher wrote a check and, after passing it over to the other, asked: "I can count on you to fix that fence?"

Cleve's answer was equally curt: "I'll start early in the morning," he answered.

He left the room in advance of the older man, and when he reached the gallery, Bess Aubrey was waiting by the door. She took his arm. "Let's walk a little way. I want to talk to you, Cleve," she said.

They had passed through the gate in the fence which surrounded the ranch house and were but dim silhouettes in the starlight when Flint came out on the gallery.

"Bess," he called harshly as he saw them. The girl ignored his call. The only evidence that she heard was a tightening of her grasp on Cleve's arm. Flint did not call again, but watched them from under lowered brows as they walked off into the murky night.

It was fully two hours later when they returned to the ranch house. Flint had long since gone inside. They parted at the gate, and when Cleve entered the bunk house he was whistling happily between his teeth.

The other cowboy had not yet gone to bed, and for some little time he watched Cleve as he rolled his belongings together. He appeared somewhat mystified by Cleve's abrupt switch from gloomy dejection to cheerfulness.

"Seems to me," he commented, eying

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cleve sharply, "that you perked up mighty sudden. What's happened, anyway? Did you talk the old man into keeping you on?"

Cleve grinned and shook his head. "Ain't telling the reason," he responded. "I'll give you this tip, though. Things will be considerable upset around here about to-morrow night, and by that time I'll be hard to find." And much to the other's disgust, that was all Cleve would say.

An alarm clock aroused Cleve about four the following morning. He rolled from his bunk, dressed, and, going to the cook shack, rustled a small supply of provisions; then, shouldering his roll, which he had left outside the bunk house, he went to the barn.

The night before Cleve had penned a horse in one of the stalls. Now he fed it, and while it was eating, he left the barn and went quietly up the path to the big ranch house. From an obscure corner of the back gallery he retrieved a heavy suit case and carried it back to the barn. After the horse had eaten, Cleve saddled, carefully tied on his roll of belongings, and stood for a moment eying the suit case reflectively. It was an unwieldy article to carry, and after a moment's profound cogitation, he disappeared into the feed room, returning with an empty feed sack. Into this he forced the suit case, tying it to his saddle horn by means of several thongs. It was yet full dark when he left the T Y T.

Now the lower end of the cañon pasture where Cleve was to do the fence repairing lay some ten miles southeast of the T Y T ranch house. Valdez, the county seat, railroad, and trading point was due south of the ranch approximately fifteen miles. Two small streams, the Big and Little Carancahua, rising back in the hills beyond the cañon pasture, flowed due west. They bisected the prairie road which led from the T Y T to Valdez about halfway between the two points. Both were easily forded by horse or vehicle except in time of high water. They were perhaps two miles apart where they crossed the road.

When Cleve left the ranch, instead of heading southeast in a direct line for the cañon pasture, he took the trail that led south into Valdez. He came to the first stream, the Little Carancahua, about daybreak, forded it, and kept on. After crossing the Big Carancahua, he stopped and unsaddled. Leisurely he prepared a light breakfast and then, returning to the shelter of a mesquite clump, changed from the everyday outfit he was wearing to his Sunday best, which he had carried in his roll. He started to turn his horse loose, but a cowman's dread of being afoot with no conveyance in sight, deterred him. Instead, he staked the horse out close by the road and sat down to wait.

Several hours passed, the sun crept gradually higher, and as midmorning neared, Cleve consulted his watch frequently, peering anxiously back up the trail in the direction from whence he had come. By nine thirty he had worried himself into a nervous sweat.

"Might have known something would happen to-day of all days," he disgustedly told himself over and over. "I'll bet a cookey that stage driver got tangled up with some Mexican hooch and ain't even got to the T Y T yet."

After thirty minutes more of waiting this probability became a fixed conclusion in Cleve's mind. "Chances are he won't come through until to-morrow now," he mused, recalling the stage driver's usual custom after a bout with John Barleycorn. "I expect the best thing for me to do would be to go and fix that fence right now. In that way I'll save what it would cost me to send a man back from town to do it. I can bed down in the old shack to-night and light out for Valdez early in the morning. I'll beat the stage in then."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After coming to this decision, Cleve changed back into his work-day clothes, saddled, and reloaded his horse. With the idea of keeping as long as possible to easy going, he continued on down the trail, intending at a certain point to turn sharply to the left and take a bee line for his destination. This was a small line rider's cabin just within the cañon pasture.

Shortly before he came to the point where he meant to leave the trail, Cleve descried a man standing by a horse possibly a hundred yards farther on. For all he was half hidden by an intervening bush, Cleve recognized him as Abel Saterlee, one of the ranchers who had participated in the steer sale. The rancher had a letter in his hand, and Cleve surmised he was waiting for the stage in order to mail the check given him by Flint.

Cleve wrinkled his face in a little grimace of disgust. Saterlee was a garrulous man, a gossipy, prying sort of a person who delighted in making everybody's business his own.

"Quickest way to get loose from him is to dodge him altogether. He'll ask more questions about where I am going and who owns this suit case than a man could answer in a month of Sundays," Cleve muttered. So, affecting not to see the rancher, he wheeled his horse into the brush and struck a real smart lope.

When he came within half a mile of the line rider's cabin, Cleve found the going extremely difficult. It was broken, and the bushes, thick growing here, slapped and whipped, threatening constantly to tear the suit case from the saddle. It was annoying, to put it mildly, and what was worse, the hardest stretch was yet ahead. Cleve's patience, which had been sorely tried that morning, now failed him.

"I'm sure tired of that thing bumping and scraping," he complained fretfully. "Don't see why I couldn't cache it and pick it up in the morning on the way out."

Suiting action to word, he dismounted and hid the offending article under an overhanging ledge of rock. But before doing this, he removed the covering sack with the intention of using it to carry staples in for his fence-fixing job. Flint had told him that he would find a keg of these necessary articles in a stable back of the shack, and they are scratchy things to carry in one's pocket.

Fifteen minutes later, Cleve dismounted at his destination. He threw open the door of the shack and sniffed his disgust. The interior was uninviting. The building was a roughly constructed log affair with a floor of hard-packed earth. It contained a single homemade table, a few chairs of like construction, several boxes, and two bunks. At one end of the room stood a small, rusty stove with the pipe askew. Some former occupant of the shack, a tall man undoubtedly, had removed the legs of the stove and elevated it on bricks for greater ease in cooking. The base was fully two feet from the earth floor. What little housekeeping the infrequent occupants had done in the past several years had been slovenly. A heap of trash, cast-off clothing, papers and the like, ornamented one corner. The earth about the stove was grease stained, and underneath it was a thick layer of wood ashes which had sifted through the cracks in the fire box. These had lain undisturbed from all appearances, for years.

Cleve opened both windows so that the air might circulate, and, after depositing his roll on one of the bunks, glanced dubiously at the stove, shrugged, and carried his few provisions outside. Building a small fire, he rustled a makeshift dinner.

This concluded, he began preparations for his afternoon job of fence fixing. Removing the feed sack which he had tied to his saddle, he entered the small

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lean-to stable where Flint had told him he would find the keg of staples. The keg was there, quarter full, and, lying on top of it, Cleve found a small sack made of heavy canvas, designed to hang from the saddle horn and to carry staples in. He hailed the find with satisfaction and tossed the now useless burlap sack into a corner. A few minutes later he was headed up the fence.

Now in all probability had Cleve known the exact reason for the non-appearance of the stage that morning, he would, instead of hurrying off to the job of fence fixing, have been riding back post haste to the T Y T. Certainly he would have avoided a very unpleasant two hours by so doing.

At approximately eight thirty the stage had left the T Y T. Bess Aubrey, as custodian of a suit case containing twenty-three thousand dollars, was the sole passenger. At ten thirty the stage had come limping back to the T Y T ranch with all four tires shot off. Profanely the driver had explained to Flint: "A tall son of a gun with a burlap feed sack pulled down over his head and body stepped out of a bunch of mesquite just this side of the Little Carancahua. He stuck me up and, after ordering the suit case full of money thrown out, cracked down on all four tires. Then he beat it back to his horse and made off into the brush, the blankety, blank hijacker."

Exhaustive questioning by Flint brought to light little more of any consequence. The robber had shot the holes in the casings of the car while standing midway and a short distance out from the machine. So the driver, his eyes straight front and his hands elevated as directed, had not seen the act performed. The robber, he noticed, as he glanced back while turning his car around, had pulled the sack from over his head and was forcing the suit case into it. Distance and an intervening clump of bushes made identification impossible.

Flint forebore to question his daughter much. She was somewhat shaken by the ordeal, and after corroborating the stage driver's statements, at once sought the house. She declared positively that the robber was no one she had ever seen before.

But Flint, vastly excited, paid no heed to her contention. He had from the first jumped to the conclusion that the guilty party was no other than Cleve Owens. He hurried to the telephone and, calling up the sheriff at Valdez, arranged for the officer and his deputies to scour the country between the T Y T and the border. The country adjacent to the T Y T would be searched by a posse of ranchers, he told the sheriff. Next Flint called up all of the interested owners, informed them of the holdup, and asked them to hurry to the T Y T.

It was close to five o'clock in the afternoon before the last owner reached the ranch. Flint declared that the guilty party was Cleve Owens. The general appearance of the bandit coincided with that of Cleve, he pointed out, and as a clincher told how Cleve had informed a brother puncher "that things would be considerable upset around the T Y T by night, and about that time he would be hard to find."

A few of the posse—men who liked and admired Cleve for the most part—scoffed openly at Flint's belief. But when old Amos Saterlee, the last man to show up, told of meeting Cleve coming from the direction of the ford with what was apparently a suit case in a burlap sack tied to his saddle horn, they were more inclined to accept Flint's view.

"He never did see me," Saterlee proclaimed in his high, carrying voice. "I got a good look at him, though, and it was Cleve all right. He took to the brush like he was heading for that shack of Flint's in the lower cañon pasture. Mebbe he's going to hide out there."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This was not likely, the ranchers agreed, after some discussion. Still it was entirely probable that he would pass close by the shack if he were heading for the border. And the cabin itself would prove a first-rate point from which to conduct their search. So they decided to make it their first objective.

Each rancher at the request of Flint had brought his saddle in his car when reporting to the T Y T, and some time before Flint had sent out several hands to drive in the saddle remuda. While they were waiting for the horses, three newcomers appeared. The trio was composed of Big Ike Tenlow and the two vaqueros who were to look after the cattle.

Big Ike immediately silenced the few scoffers who as yet were dubious of Cleve's guilt. He listened to Flint's excited tale and, at the conclusion, produced a burlap feed sack which he carried tied to his saddle. "We came by the shack on the way in, as I wanted to see how much fixin' it would need to make it so's these boys could live in it. We unsaddled and had dinner there, and I run across this sack in the lean-to stable when I was huntin' something to rub my horse down with; had the greaser tie it to my saddle, thinking it might come handy if we changed horses again."

The listening group nodded at this plausible explanation, and Big Ike went on.

"They was somebody's roll in the shack, too. I figured most likely it belonged to a hand Flint had sent to stay until my boys got here. If it belonged to the robber, he either lit out when he heard us coming, or else was away hiding his swag."

Big Ike's tale, told without any unnecessary embellishments, was convincing, and was the last link needed to fasten the guilt conclusively on Cleve. Especially was this so when one of the ranchers examining the burlap sack found several holes—whether worn or punched it was impossible to determine—spaced just so a man's arms could slip through them easily when the sack was pulled down over his head. Ike, who had grown right interested, demonstrated this. He was a tall man, not nearly as heavy as he had been when he left the country years before.

"You can see right through this kind of a sack, it's that coarse," he said as he strutted around. "I never knew that before."

By the time the saddle horses had been driven in, it was nearly dark. Flint proposed that they have supper before they start, and it was while eating that old Alf Commons offered a further suggestion.

"Why not wait now until midnight before starting for the shack?" he asked. "The moon will be up by that time, and that will make the going much easier. We can make the trip and get there before daybreak. If whoever is there stays all night, we'll catch him, and if he has left, we could not take up his trail until daylight anyhow."

This plan brought forth some little discussion, but in the end the plan was accepted as feasible, and old Alf by acclamation was made leader of the posse.

In accepting, he stated his position in plain terms. "I'll take it, boys," he said in his slow way, "but as long as I'm running things, there won't be no poppin' the lid off the box. Whoever we get is goin' to have a fair shake. If we catch him with the goods on, we will turn him over to the sheriff. If the evidence is circumstantial, we'll lay our cards on the table and give him a chance to clear himself. You know," he said gravely, "you can sure hurt a man's reputation by jailing him on suspicion. I believe in the Golden Rule myself."

Alf's stand was accepted without demur. He was a fair, unbiased man, a supporter of law and order and as thoughtful of another's welfare as he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was of his own. Justice would be rendered impartially all felt sure.

At eleven the posse started, a dozen somber, determined men bent on bringing the culprit to justice. Big Ike and the vaqueros accompanied them. It was just breaking day when they gained the neighborhood of the shack. A whinny from the lean-to stable warned them that a horse was stabled there. Dismounting, they stole quietly toward the door of the shack. Alf Commons, the leader, knocked, and when Cleve in a sleepy voice replied, he demanded admittance.

They heard Cleve's feet hit the floor and patter across the room. When he flung the door open a dozen guns covered him.

"What the devil——" he began, his voice perplexed, but Flint motioned him to silence with his six-shooter.

"Get inside and no funny moves," he commanded harshly.

Unarmed and utterly powerless, Cleve stepped back in the shack. The cold, snappy tang of a fall morning made it as chilly inside the cabin as it was without, and the scantily dressed prisoner shivered involuntarily.

Old man Alf Commons noticed Cleve shake. "Slip on the rest of your clothes, son," he said not unkindly, and, turning to one of Big Ike's vaqueros directed him to straighten up the leaning chimney and start a fire in the stove.

While these instructions were being carried out the posse draped themselves on the various chairs and boxes, two of them, guns in hand, taking a position at the door. When the fire was well alight, and Cleve had finished dressing, the gray-bearded leader drew up to the small table and motioned Cleve to take the chair opposite him.

"Young man," he said in a stern manner, "it looks very much as if you were the one who robbed the stage of twenty-three thousand dollars yesterday morning. Now in order to give you a fair chance to clear yourself, providing you are not guilty, I will state the evidence we have against you."

Then, slowly, but with great emphasis, he narrated the circumstances beginning with Cleve's incautious remark to his bunk-house companion and ending by producing the burlap sack with the holes in it.

"Now if you can explain any of this away or prove that you did not come from the direction of the holdup carrying a suit case shortly after the robbery occurred, you are at liberty to do so."

Cleve deliberated for a space, his mouth tightened, and he shrugged. "Saterlee's correct. I brought a suit case up here with me all right," he said, "but I didn't rob any stage."

Old Alf nodded. "So far so good," he said. "Now I propose that you tell us where the suit case is, and if it is not the one we are searching for, that will be a point in your favor."

But at this suggestion Cleve rebelled. His jaw hardened with grim determination, and his mouth set stubbornly. "I don't reckon it's any of you men's business about that suit case," he said shortly.

A threatening murmur arose from the posse at this. Several of them were outspoken in their declaration that he would have to produce the suit case, and one young and impetuous rancher nodded to the hot stove suggestively, declaring that he knew a way of making Cleve come through.

Alf Commons, however, paid no heed to the talk but sat silent, as if deliberating, seeking for some line of argument that would make Cleve realize the futility of his position.

It was just at this juncture that there came a rapid tattoo of hoofs into the clearing. Almost immediately there was an eager knock at the door. It was opened by one of the guards at a nod from Alf, and Bess Aubrey stood framed in the doorway. His body bar-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ring the entrance, the guard looked appealingly back over his shoulder at Flint, who got to his feet.

"This is no place for you, Bess," he said sharply. "Why are you here, anyway?"

She did not reply directly to his question, but said to the room in general: "I lost the trail in the darkness, or I would have caught up with you before. I knew you wouldn't let me come if I asked, so I followed behind. I was an eyewitness to the robbery, and I believe my testimony will be important."

Alf Commons nodded at this. "'Pears to me," he said, addressing Flint, "that there's a lot to what she says. We didn't ask her much at the ranch, being so busy with the stage driver. Suppose you let her come in."

The guard withdrew, and with an impersonal nod that included every one in the room, she stepped inside and took a chair. When she was seated, Alf carefully explained all that had gone before, stressing Cleve's refusal to tell the whereabouts of the suit case he had been seen carrying.

Bess smiled a trifle at this. "Possibly he might reconsider," she told Alf, "if you will permit me to talk privately with him for a moment."

Alf gave his permission with a nod, and glanced away with studied indifference while the girl, bending across the table, conversed with Cleve in whispers.

"The accused," she smiled when she straightened, "was not protecting himself in the least by refusing to divulge the whereabouts of the suit case, and I'll give you my word he is—is ignorant of the contents. If you desire, you may send a man for it." She gave minute directions as to how it might be found under the ledge where it was concealed.

With a curt word or two Alf directed one of the guards to search out the suit case and bring it back. After he had left, Bess spoke again:

"I never thought of it until just now," she said, "but there was one peculiar thing I noticed about the robber that probably escaped the stage driver's attention. When he shot the tires off the car he aimed his pistol like this"—and, raising her left arm to a crooked position, Bess rested her right hand across it and squinted down one finger. "It seems to me," she proceeded, "that is the best clew yet. Find the man who habitually uses his left arm as a rest while aiming a six-shooter."

This suggestion was received in silence, but it caused each member of the posse to deliberate. Of course there was the possibility that the style was adopted by the robber for that one occasion only, but this was not probable. And every man there knew that Cleve habitually shot with arm outstretched.

Thirty minutes passed—a period of acute tension—before the guard returned from his search and deposited on the table a heavy, unopened suit case.

The eyes of most of the ranchers hardened at the sight of it. In appearance it was identical with the one Flint had used as a depository for the steer money. But Flint himself looked puzzled. He recognized the suit case, and he knew it was not the one he had used for all it resembled it. How it came into Cleve's possession though had him bewildered.

He watched silently, his mouth slightly agape, while his daughter with a smile directed that Cleve reach over and unfasten the straps. Then she produced a key, and he unlocked it and threw it open.

He was no more surprised than the others though when the contents stood revealed. Blank astonishment was mirrored on some faces, others struggled to repress threatening smiles, and Big Ike guffawed outright. Exposed to the curious gaze of the posse lay a neatly packed pile of beautiful garments.

Blushing furiously, Bess explained: "Cleve was to meet the stage at the Big

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

Carancahua, and we were to go into Valdez together. After depositing the suit case full of money to father's credit, we planned to be married and leave immediately for the northern part of the State, where Cleve's father owns a ranch. Father would have been suspicious if I had taken a second suit case."

Flint's jaw sagged when the import of this news was borne home to him. At one blow his hopes of proving Cleve's guilt had vanished, and he was faced besides by the possibility of losing his daughter through his unwarranted interference in her heart's desire. He sat speechless, looking vacantly first at Bess, then at Cleve.

Big Ike, coarse by nature and ribald by inclination, seemed to be enjoying himself most of all. He had reached the second time toward the opened suit case and was in the act of picking up a filmy garment over which to jest, when some one pointed and yelled: "Look out!"

Big Ike glanced in the direction of the pointing arm and his eyes became glassy. A ghastly pallor overspread his face.

The shack was now almost unbearably hot from the fire within the stove, and, warmed by this heat, a rattlesnake was slowly emerging from the heap of trash in the corner which he had selected as a good place to den up for the winter. Now, unerringly, he was making for the source of the heat. He rippled sinuously across the floor and to a refuge beneath the stove, where, angry at the commotion that was taking place within the room, he coiled and buzzed warningly.

For a moment's space it seemed as though Big Ike would collapse on his feet, a victim of abject fear, but with a great effort he regained command of himself and reached toward his belt.

Four times in succession the barking roar of a .45 filled the small shack, and four bullets spattered the ashes underneath the stove. The rattler, punctured through and through, writhed in death.

So absorbed were the posse in noting the result of the shots, that no one had glanced toward the marksman—not until Bess Aubrey exclaimed: "Look!"

Big Ike stood like a statue, eyes hypnotically fixed on the reptile beneath the stove, frozen in the position he had assumed to shoot. His left arm crooked and slightly elevated, his pistol hand steadied across it for a rest, he stood in trancelike immobility.

For a space—to the quick-witted girl it seemed like centuries, but in reality the time might have been measured by seconds—the onlookers gazed at Big Ike before they connected his method of aiming with the evidence that had gone before. Then the act of the two vaqueros who slipped past the guard and ran toward their horses, roused them to the fact that the robber stood before them, self-convicted.

But few sharp, probing questions directed at the unnerved man were necessary before he broke completely down and revealed the hiding place of the suit case in which later the money was found intact.

While Alf was arranging for the prisoner to be taken to Valdez, Flint half apologetically explained to Cleve:

"Sancho must have thought this plan up after he found the money was not to be divided. That's why he was so anxious to meet his partner instead of going with the cattle—wanted to plan the robbery out with him. They would have worked it, too, only for that snake. When Ike found out that you were suspected, it was pie for him."

Flint broke off his explanation at this point and turned to the posse, who were leaving for Valdez. "When you come back," he directed, "suppose you bring a parson with you. I got to hold what I got somehow," and he grinned at Cleve.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Moccasin Trail

By

J. Thompson Kescel

Author of "Because of the Bad Heart," etc.

RIFLES in hand and bodies bent well over, the pair intently studied the dirt-caked splotches of crimson and the footprints in the ground close beside the dusty road, winding through the sparsely vegetated Arizona hills.

The tall, grizzled man in his shirt sleeves—holstered revolver hanging low—was Sheriff Bob Hunter. The skinny little man—his head bound in red flannel after the style of an Apache turban, his body bare to the waist—was old Yuma Tom, a full-blooded Apache Indian.

"What do you make of 'em, Tom?" Hunter asked in his easy drawl, gaze still fixed on the ground.

Yuma Tom grunted and replied without looking up. "Um. No Injuns—even though tracks made by moccasined feet. White man or Mexican—maybe. Put on moccasins to make people think Injuns done dirty work."

Hunter straightened up. "So you think that's the how of it, do you, Tom? Some whites or Mexicans wearin' moccasins, to try and throw suspicion on to your people?"

Raising his head, Yuma Tom looked into the sheriff's tanned face. "That's it, Mista Bob. Guess maybe you know nuf 'bout Injun footprints to tell them tracks no Injun's."

"Yeah, Tom, reckon as how I do. Still I'm no tracker like you. For you get things in signs and tracks that I don't see anything in at all.

"But now—as you don't think Indians held up the stage, killed the driver, and got away with all that registered mail—who do you suppose did do the job?

"When the stage was driven into Calito, with a passenger handling the ribbons and the dead driver stretched out on the floor with a blanket over his body, I right away thought of you to do some tracking for me. Now, though, I'm wondering if you could give me some idea as to who turned this trick? You get so much from tracks and signs."

Grunting, Yuma Tom looked back to the ground. Then after a few seconds of silent scrutiny of the tracks in the dirt, he returned: "You wait here for little while. One hour. I think maybe trail will tell me lot that signs here no tell."

Rifle in hand, he started up the hillside—a wrinkled, skinny little old redskin, as well known along the Southwest border as Sheriff Bob Hunter himself.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the end of the hour, as Hunter looked up toward the crest of the hill, Yuma Tom walked into sight. "Bring horses and come 'long up here, Mista Bob," he shouted.

Hunter swung into the saddle on his well-built buckskin and with Yuma Tom's own mount—the great-chested, white-coated stallion, Smoky Cloud—on a leading rope, started up the hillside, dotted here and there with scraggly brush.

"Well, Tom," Hunter inquired, as he reached the hill's rocky top, "what've you found out?"

"Quite a bit, maybe, Mista Bob. But come 'long with me."

With the ease of a young man, Yuma Tom mounted Smoky Cloud and started across the low, gray hills. A quarter of an hour later on he stopped at the edge of a clump of scrub oaks, the tallest of which was about ten feet high, and remarked: "Get down now, Mista Bob."

Hunter dismounted, his eyes at once turning toward the ground, as he followed the little tracker into the scrubby oaks. Here, beside the footprints of moccasined feet, were also hoof tracks of horses. And what was more, the imprints of men's boots and shoes.

These Hunter saw for himself. But it was Yuma Tom who explained how the moccasins had been changed for stout leather shoes or boots with heavy soles.

"Two men hold up stage, steal mail, and come here," he said. "Tracks tell me that. They think because they walk on rocks part of time that nobody can followum. Then here—where they have cayuses tied—they changum moccasins for boots and shoes. Then ride away. This plain to you?"

"Yeah, Tom—sort of. And I b'lieve that you're right in your deductions. Still, where does that lead us? This is a big stretch of country. There are lots of folks hereabouts. Is what we've found out going to help us any more than just makin' sure that the men who did the job wasn't Indians?"

"Um, yes. I read things in tracks of shoes that you no seeum at all. Heels on boots of man with big feet have piece of iron on outside, to keep heels from runnin' over. I see that when his heel sink extra deep in soft dirt. The other man gotum shoes with heap pointed toes. Who 'round Calito wear shoes like that?"

"Almost any Mexican dandy, Tom. Pointed-toed shoes and Mexicans sort of run together—when they wear shoes at all. Seem to take to 'em 'bout the same as they do to the high crown, decorated sombreros. That there don't help us a whole lot—unless you can trail these hombres right to where we can lay our hands on 'em. And as they've had nigh onto eight hours' start, it looks as if the chance of overtakin' them by trackin', is slim. You'll have to go slow. They are hittin' it up."

"Um." Yuma Tom looked at the horses' tracks, leading toward the edge of the clump of oaks. "That most likely so. They ride heap fast. So what you want me to do? Follow trail?"

"Yeah, Tom. That's it. Track 'em down! And if there's anybody who can keep after 'em till they're cornered—you're that one."

"Um, yes," Yuma Tom nodded. "All right, then. Come 'long."

Afoot for a mile over the low, hilly country, he followed the horses' tracks with little difficulty. Then he swung into the saddle on the dull white stallion's back and headed south toward the United States-Mexico boundary line—the grizzled sheriff, astride his buckskin, following close to the rear.

About half-past five, after crossing a two-mile, dusty, alkali flat, they rode into some other hills, finding them badly cut up with small rocky cañons, gullies, ravines, and somber gray fractures.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bad place for trackum," the wrinkled, sharp-eyed old redskin remarked, in half grunts that were almost unintelligible. "They come here on purpose—maybe—just to hide trail. Um. Guhh!

"Still, I no licked. It heap better for us, though, if it morning—instead of so close to dark. Little daylight time left. But perhaps——"

He said no more, but swung to the ground and at once began looking for signs of his quarry. Back and forth he walked, his nearly naked body bent far over, his rifle in his right hand, and his coal-black eyes fixed on the ground.

Time passed rapidly. The sun dipped behind the hills. The trail was very confusing.

The dull shadows of evening made the light poor before the trail straightened itself out so that Yuma Tom could say definitely which way the fugitives had finally taken. And then, sheriff and tracker stood on the ground within a short distance of the boundary line.

"Gone to Mexico," said Yuma Tom laconically. "Now what?"

"Nothing—for me, Tom. I can't go into Mexico after my man.

"Still, there's one thing more you can do for me. And that is, trail 'em till you find out who they are. Meanwhile, I'll nose around on the United States side of the line to see who's missin'. Get what I mean?"

"Um-m—yes, Mista Bob. I sabe. I do that easy nuff, 'cause I know north part of Mexico good as Arizona. Yaqui Injuns down that way. And Apache and Yaquis 'most same tribe.

"But when I find this pair, what I do withum? Bring 'em to you?"

Hunter thumbed his chin. "That's what I'd like you to do, Tom. But it can't be that a way.

"You see, those coyotes are in another country. And an officer in the United States ain't got the lawful right to go tearin' into other lands after prisoners. If they should be nabbed this side of the line, though—well, that's altogether different.

"Most likely those hombres are headin' for Santa Cruz. That's a great hangout for border tough cases.

"You've got a friend there, too—come to think of it. John Green—the United States secret service man—doing postal work a good deal of his time. You remember him? The tall, fine-looking hombre around forty, with black hair and eyes. The man you trailed Pedro Guzman and his gang for, after they broke into the post office up Crayton way. If you see him, tip him off to what has happened.

"You remember how to make yourself known to him or any other man in the service, in that secret way of theirs. Green told me that he put you on to some of the signs and words.

"When you've got your men located, get word to me. Then I'll go at bringin' 'em back in the regular way—if it can be done. Hard, though, to get anybody out of Mexico.

"Your pay will be the same on this job as on the others you've done for the country. Like the idea of it?"

"Um; sure, Mista Bob. I like it fine. So when light come again, I go south on trail. To-night, Smoky Cloud and me stay here. Feed for horse fair, and I gotum some grub in saddle-bag."

The stars were out when Sheriff Hunter, after shaking hands with his little old Indian friend, headed north for his office in Calito, while Yuma Tom made ready to spend the night where he was.

When the sky in the east began to lighten with the approach of day, he rose from the ground, and after draping over his shoulders the blanket in which he had slept, he saddled the smoky white stallion, preparatory to taking up the trail.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At first, on account of the light, he traveled afoot. But as it grew brighter, and he found himself in Mexico, with his quarry now riding boldly southward, apparently not at all trying to cover over their trail, he rode on after them at fairly good speed.

Shortly before noon he was in a Mexican store on the outskirts of Santa Cruz, buying a blue cotton shirt and a high-crowned sombrero. As Sheriff Hunter had prophesied, the trail led to the lively border town.

Now it was a question of locating a man with big feet, who had small strips of iron screwed to the outside heel of his boots, and a man with pointed, Mexican shoes. The high heels of stockmen's boots were quite likely to be stayed with a strip of malleable iron on the wearing side, to keep the heels from running over.

By midnight the little redskin—blanket thrown around his shoulders Mexican fashion, and his new sombrero on his head—was looking over the crowd in the Conejo Blanco combination saloon and gambling house—smoke-filled, brightly lighted, and noisy. He felt that he might have his men spotted. At any rate, sitting in front of a faro table was a big American, wearing boots with heel irons on them. The man sitting at his elbow was a Mexican who, as Yuma Tom knew, went by the name of "The Rabbit."

The big American, Jim Guthrie—mean of eye, hard of face, with a drooping, sandy mustache and wearing rough out-of-door garb and knee-length boots—was also known to Yuma Tom. Not alone through several meetings, but—like the swarthy-faced, beady-eyed Rabbit—by reputation, also.

Moving closer to the faro layout, Yuma Tom watched from under his wide-brimmed hat. Guthrie won a bet—while The Rabbit lost.

Suddenly Guthrie turned around. And as he looked into Yuma Tom's wizened face, he gave a start. He had known the old Indian for a long time. He knew, too, of the intimacy between him and the grizzled sheriff. What the red man was doing in Santa Cruz, Guthrie might find out by asking. So he growled out: "What you doin' here, Injun?"

"Just come down this way to have pow-wow with my Yaqui brothers," Yuma Tom lied.

Guthrie grunted and resumed play, losing the next three bets. The Rabbit lost, also; and when each fished a large roll of bills from inside his shirt, to buy more chips, Yuma Tom eyed the money with keen interest. Where did they get so much cash?

Twice more Guthrie lost. Then he turned to Yuma Tom and snarled out: "Looka here, Injun; you're my Jonah! I'm goin' to throw you out."

Pushing his chair back, he arose and, unceremoniously hustling the little red man to the door, shoved him out into the night.

"Them red cattle never ought to be allowed indoors at all," said Guthrie shortly, as he took his chair in front of the layout again. "If I wuz runnin' a joint, they never would be allowed to cross the doorsill. Now you watch me bust the bank!"

From the way that Guthrie and The Rabbit won after that it really seemed that Yuma Tom's presence had had some influence on their luck. For, within an hour, the white-toothed Mexican faro dealer shrugged his shoulders, and, as he turned the box down, announced wryly: "The bank is broken. I congratulate you."

Very naturally, Guthrie and The Rabbit left the Conejo Blanco in high good humor, after treating the whole house. As they crossed the street, Yuma Tom stepped from an alley, with the apparent intention of following them. Yet in the middle of the dusty thoroughfare he stopped, and after lighting a match,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

began examining their tracks in the dust.

A Yaqui Indian friend coming up, asked in the Apache tongue: "For what are you looking?"

"For a nice new American ten-cent piece," Yuma Tom returned, his gaze fixed on one of Guthrie's footprints. Then he turned his eyes to the tracks of The Rabbit.

The footprints that he had just studied were made by the same boots and shoes as those in the clump of scrubby oaks. There was no doubt of it. Yet what good would the footprints do toward proving that Guthrie and The Rabbit had held up the Calto stage, stole the registered mail, robbed the passengers, and killed the driver?

Yuma Tom was satisfied Sheriff Hunter would be, too. But for extradition purposes, footprints would not, in all probability, be sufficient evidence. Yuma Tom wished that he could have a talk with Green. That was it. The first thing in the morning, then, he would try to find his man.

He did try—only to learn that Green had left Santa Cruz two days before. At this piece of news, the little Indian thumbed his red chin thoughtfully. By nightfall, when the big oil lamps threw their light over the crowd already gathering in the Conejo Blanco for more hours of hilarity and gaming—with a new bank roll ready at the faro layout—he had nothing definite planned.

Yet when Guthrie and The Rabbit awoke the next forenoon, after a night of carousing, they were much surprised to find that their footwear had been stolen. Guthrie, on account of his large feet, would have a hard time replacing his high boots.

Possibly they suspected who the thief was. At any rate, when early in the afternoon they met Yuma Tom on the main street of Santa Cruz, they were very abusive to him—Guthrie, wearing the largest shoes that he could buy in town, going so far as to knock the little Indian down.

Rising slowly, Yuma Tom picked up his sombrero, put it on his head, and then, with his blanket about his shoulders, walked away—a hundred pairs of eyes turned upon him.

Now, as when Guthrie had put him out of the Conejo Blanco, Yuma Tom could not give way to his natural impulse to fight back. He considered himself working under orders. His boss, Sheriff Bob Hunter, would not try to bring on a real fight with men he calculated on landing in jail. It would not, according to the ethics of a white-man officer, be at all the right thing to do.

More than ever, now, the old redskin wished that Green was in Santa Cruz. But as he was not, there was nothing Yuma Tom could do, save try to find evidence enough to fasten the crime for a certainty on The Rabbit and Guthrie, and then report to Hunter.

For the next two days Guthrie and The Rabbit made it a point to look up Yuma Tom and to abuse him shamefully. They were drinking heavily, and as they had plenty of money to spend, had the run of Santa Cruz.

Then another American, calling himself Jed Higson, drifted into town and immediately allied himself with Guthrie and his dark-skinned partner.

Higson was of medium height, very broad of shoulder, roughly dressed, with several days' growth of bristly reddish beard on his face, and a jaw that was decidedly pugnacious. He looked like a bruiser and acted the same. And the holster in which he carried his ugly, blue-black revolver was scarred and worn.

Twice, when with The Rabbit and Guthrie, he laughed uproariously at the way in which they abused Yuma Tom. And then he asked to be permitted to spank the little man. Yuma Tom es-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caped this humiliation only by what seemed each time a piece of luck. First it was a pistol duel between a couple of Mexican cowboys. The other time, it was a runaway team, which for the moment attracted everybody's attention.

Thereafter, whenever he saw a chance of dodging Higson, he did so. He certainly intended, however, to settle with him at some later date.

"That white man with reddish whiskers, bad medicine," Yuma Tom confided to his Yaqui friend. "If it were not that I have something of much account on my mind, I would settle with him in the way of our fathers. Never before did I dodge any man. But with him, I must—until a little later on. Then, in my own way, I shall make him fight me as I say—or admit that he is a coward."

Another day passed. And when Green still did not return to Santa Cruz, the little redskin decided to take matters entirely into his own hands. He was not going to loaf around any longer.

Shortly before ten o'clock the next morning, Guthrie and The Rabbit—sleeping in the same room—awoke after a night of drinking and gambling, to get a shock that brought them out of bed in a hurry. Somebody had robbed them of not only the money they had stolen, but also of what was left of their winnings. And that somebody was, so they guessed—from the red flannel head band lying inside an open window—old Yuma Tom. When they found moccasined footprints in the dirt, just outside of the window, they were positive as to who had been the thief.

A half hour later, on the outskirts of Santa Cruz—Higson now with them—they saw Yuma Tom, astride Smoky Cloud, apparently heading for the United States. Although the trio were more than seventy-five yards away, they saw that the Indian had a pair of knee-length boots dangling behind the cantle of his saddle, and something that looked like a pair of shoes tied with the boots.

"There's my boots!" Guthrie choked out, his hand flying down to the butt of his holstered revolver.

"And my shoes!" The Rabbit echoed huskily. "And he probably has the money in his saddlebags. What shall we do?"

"Git our horses and take after him!" This from Higson, quickly. "We dastn't risk shootin' at him. Distance too great fer side-arm stuff. He'd know right off we suspicioned him, and would ride like the devil straight to his own people. Then that would settle the whole business.

"Come, git our horses and try to cut him off this side of the line. He won't know we're follow' 'im, so he'll most likely ride slow. What you say?"

It took but a few minutes to saddle up and start north. For the first two miles of fast riding over the dry, low, hilly country, dotted with cactus and thorny brush, they saw nothing of their man—more than the dust raised by his mount. But as they topped a ridge and looked out on a wide stretch of fairly level country, they saw the dull white stallion and its rider, some six hundred yards ahead.

"That's him!" Higson exulted. "Watch yourselves, though. Don't hit 'er up too fast, or he's liable to git it in his crop that we're after 'im. Our cayuses ain't slouches. Still, that big smoky stallion of his maybe has got the edge on our own stock.

"Here, you follow my lead. We'll pull up on 'im graduallike. Then nab 'im—or drop 'im." So saying, Higson touched his sorrel with the spurs.

Guardedly as they could under the circumstances, considering that they were in plain sight of their quarry if he looked back, they rode on to the wide, level stretch and continued the pursuit at fairly good speed. Yet so far as they could determine, they were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not gaining. The little redskin still kept the six-hundred-yard lead. So they hit it up a little faster, until their horses were pounding along at a good stiff gallop.

Still they drew no nearer, and as they had only revolvers, they knew the futility of trying to get their man at such a range. In the hills, a bit farther along, though, where they would be at times out of sight, they might get close enough to bring down their man with a bullet.

But in the hills they did not gain. For it seemed as if the old red man guessed what his pursuers had in mind.

They hoped to get him on the Mexican side of the international boundary line, if possible. This, though, they failed to do. And when in some hills, two miles on the American side of the line, they caught a glimpse of the white stallion and a man upon his back—farther away than ever, now, even though they had been practically racing their mounts for the past mile—they were close to giving up hope.

Yet they would make one last game effort. And, with Higson in the lead, they spurred, single file, into a crooked cañon. Halfway through, above the clatter of their horses' hoofs, they heard a shrill war whoop, coming from behind two slabs of rock on the hillside just ahead of them.

There followed instantly a sharp command of: "Stop—or I shoot!"

Even as the trio brought their mounts to a standstill, their eyes turned toward the rocks, where they saw the bare black head of old Yuma Tom, and a protruding rifle barrel. They were three against one, and they had a chance to fight it out. But they knew well enough that before they could jerk their revolvers from their holsters, that rifle would spit out a leaden slug. And who was to stop that first slug?

"We surrender, Indio!" The Rabbit cried in fear. "Do not shoot!" and he raised his hands above his head.

Quickly throwing their own hands up, Higson and Guthrie shouted, almost together, that they also gave in.

"Um, all right, then!" Yuma Tom half grunted. "Turn 'round and face horses other way. Use left hand."

Now, again bare to the waist, and with two long-bladed, sheathed knives dangling from his buckskin belt, the little old redskin took, one by one, his prisoners' weapons, and made the men dismount.

Why he had two knives, they could not guess. But his reason was made evident when, after herding his prisoners along ahead of him at the point of his rifle, into a circular, level spot among the hills, a young Apache suddenly appeared and tied the hands of Guthrie and The Rabbit, while Yuma Tom faced Higson—far enough away from the others to be out of earshot.

"Now, big cuss, you and me gotta settle something!" he said coldly. "You treatum me worser than if I rattlesnake, in Santa Cruz. Never before in my whole life did I dodge 'way from man—Injun or paleface—like I did you.

"But I had reason for that. I after other skunks. Now I gotum safe on United States side of line, and my Apache brother take care of them, if anything happen to me. In little while, my good old friend, Sheriff Bob Hunter come for 'em.

"My horse, which you see scootum off, is rode by a Yaqui Injun friend. It all planned in Santa Cruz that he wait here for me, after I rob two skunks, and so foolum into followin' me 'cross the line. My scheme work good. And Yaqui friend have all evidence to hang your pardners. The boots fit Guthrie. The shoes fit The Rabbit. And money and other things they steal, in saddlebags.

"But you different. I no ketchum anything 'bout you, only score to settle. Now, we here alone. If I wait till Mista Bob comes, he say, right off:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'No, Tom! No! You can't do that. As an officer, I can't let you!' Without him, though—well, that different!

"So I take one knife. You take other. Then we fight."

Higson, grinning, looked the nearly naked little redskin over. The grin was so broad and so natural that Yuma Tom abruptly stopped speaking. He couldn't understand this at all. Was the man unafraid, or did he welcome death? Even a stolid Indian could not face danger with more unconcern.

Yuma Tom unsheathed one of the knives and tossed it, handle first, at the heavy-set man's feet. He expected to see the knife snatched up, and Higson lunge for him.

But instead, Higson merely let out a laughing: "You durned little pepper box!" Then he rubbed a forefinger across his right eye, and remarked casually: "Desert dust is hard on one's eyes, ain't it?"

"Huh?" Yuma Tom grunted in surprise. "What you say?"

Higson repeated his remark.

Whereupon Yuma Tom, black eyes gleaming, replied: "Yeah! But it fine to live on desert, so one can get desert dust in eyes."

"All right, then," said Hodgson easily, "we know each other. And after the pass words we've just exchanged, let's shake hands."

Still grinning at the mystified little Indian, he explained: "John Green told me, when I left him sick in Tucson, that you knew this much of our passwords. Sheriff Hunter told me, too, when I went to see him, that you were trailing the pair who had held up the stage.

"Soon as I got to Santa Cruz, disguised as a bad hombre, I easy enough got onto who had done the stage job by the way those hairpins there were throwing money around. So my first thought was to make myself solid with them. To do it, I acted like a dog toward you—for which I'm a lot sorry, and I apologize. I expected to meet you somehow, and explain. But you always dodged me as if I had the smallpox.

"Then this morning, when you headed north, with the two cutthroats over there after you, I urged 'em on, and was tickled to death to be one of the gang. Because—well, because you see I couldn't arrest the pair in Santa Cruz. But here in the United States they are our meat—yours and mine. The evidence you gathered is plenty to send 'em where they belong."

DIGS UP BIG BLOCK OF ICE

A FREAK of nature near Reno, Nevada, in the form of a huge solid block of ice, buried twelve feet under ground, was recently unearthed by a steam shovel, which was employed on the new Truckee River Highway. The workmen, after making numerous attempts to go around the ice, finally were forced to blast their way through it with high explosives. It measured sixty feet in length, ten feet in thickness, and twenty feet in width.

It is supposed that originally the ice, which is estimated to be about forty years old, was a field of snow on the mountainside above and was compressed into its present form by an avalanche.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trouble Range

By

Charles Wesley Sanders

Author of "The Bullet," "Riding into Danger," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

BOB CLIFFORD leaves the life of a ranger and goes back to his father's ranch. He finds his father cleaning his guns, and suspects that there is trouble brewing. He learns that a certain man by the name of Wingate is anxious to buy the Clifford ranch. Although Mr. Clifford had contemplated selling the ranch, he changes his mind upon the arrival of his son.

Wingate is furious when he learns that he cannot obtain the property, and he accuses Clifford of not keeping his promise. Bob and Wingate quarrel and fight it out, Bob gaining the upper hand. Hostilities are formally opened between the two.

Bob further humiliates Wingate, and in retaliation Wingate sends two men to murder Bob in his bed. One of them, Hutchins, succeeds in entering Bob's room and is collared by Bob, who turns him over to his father while he pursues the other housebreaker, who has fled. Bob overtakes Astel, the escaping culprit, and, in an encounter, kills him.

Wingate gets Hutchins out on bail when he is arrested for housebreaking. A warrant is sworn out by Wingate for the arrest of Jake Clifford, Bob's father, because of the poisoning of Wingate's sheep.

Bob and Weaver confer, and they decide that Weaver must go to Oklahoma and discover the secret of Wingate's past. They scheme to get a photograph of Wingate.

CHAPTER XIV.

AMBUSHED.

PUZZLED by the shooting, Bob sat in the door of the cabin for hours till long after midnight. Ordinarily he would not have thought so much about the firing of the two shots, but because of the strange train of events which had followed his return home he gave added value to every happening. He came to the conclusion that another attack had been made on him and let it go at that, though he could not understand why the attack had not been followed up. Doubtless it had been made by a man without much back bone, and he had been frightened off.

It was after one o'clock when Campbell awoke and came out of the cabin. After giving up his puzzle, Bob had thought of Weaver and wondered why he had not returned. He voiced that to Campbell.

"Mebbe somethin' happened to him," Campbell offered. "It ain't like Sam to lag over an errand. He must have been interested in that one, too."

"I'll go on down to the house," Bob said. "Maybe he stopped there."

"I'll look after things up here," Campbell promised. "If there is any more gun play I'll be in on it. You lemme know, Bob, if anything has happened to that Weaver fella."

Bob knew that real anxiety underlay Campbell's cover of scorn, and he promised. He went down to where he had left his horse, mounted, and started toward the head of the cañon. He had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gone not more than a quarter of a mile when three men stepped out from the shadows of the roadside. They had their guns on him before he could make a move, and he could only obey their order to hold up his hands. He recognized the men as belonging to Wingate's outfit.

"Take his gun, one of you boys," came Wingate's voice from behind him.

Bob turned his head and saw Wingate approaching him. Wingate stopped beneath him and looked up at him with contemptuous eyes.

"Holdup, eh?" Bob asked sneeringly. "You brought enough men with you, didn't you? 'Fraid to come alone, were you?"

"I've got you," Wingate returned. "That's enough for me."

He turned about to the man who had taken Bob's gun and held out his hand. The man relinquished the gun to him. Wingate examined it and then he looked up at Bob, triumph replacing the contempt in his eyes.

"Fired one shot, didn't you, and one was enough?" he asked.

"I fired a shot after I had been fired upon," Bob said coldly. "There were three shots altogether."

"Two," said Wingate. "After you murdered that man one of my men took a shot at you and then he ran down to my place and told me. I got these boys together and we came up to get you. We could string you up, couldn't we? Murdering a man in cold blood is reason enough, ain't it?"

Bob saw that Wingate had made another tricky play. The man was resourceful, and he was without code or conscience.

"You won't string me up," Bob said. "You haven't got the nerve."

"Haven't I?" Wingate blazed out. "Mebbe I have."

"You better make the most of this opportunity, Wingate," Bob ground out. "So help me, this is the last chance you get. Fist chance *I* get after this I'm going for you with a gun. I've held off long enough. I've given you too much rope. You are a snake in the grass, and you get a snake's treatment from me from now on. I will set my heel on you, Wingate."

"You see," Wingate said, appealing to the men. "He's a killer. It's just what I've told you all along."

"Let's string him up and have done with it, then," one of the men growled out. "None of us is safe from him. There's four of us here. I reckon we could fix up one of these here alibis. I reckon we would need it. This Clifford outfit seems to have the sheriff where it wants him. I'm for stringing him up."

Bob, watching Wingate closely, saw that Wingate was "for" that plan, too. The light of a terrible temptation glowed in his eyes. He wet his thick lips in that way he had.

Bob knew that there was a bare chance that the man would yield to that temptation. Here was his opportunity to dispose of Bob for good and all. There would be risk in it, of course, and it became a question as to whether Wingate was prepared to take the risk.

"A better way," another man offered, "would be to shoot him full of holes. Then we could empty his gun and throw it in the road. We could say he murdered that fella up there and then shot it out with us."

Fear which he at once struck down, touched Bob. That was a plan which Wingate could successfully carry out. Four men would swear that Bob, after killing the man, had resisted capture, had elected to shoot it out, and had gone down before a fusillade of bullets which these men would have been justified in firing. Bob was afraid for a moment that life, which had always been so sweet in spite of everything, was about to end for him.

But then Wingate looked at him,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and there was only disappointment in his eyes. Bob saw that for some reason of his own he had had to put the plan away from him, sorely tempted though he had been to accept it.

"No men," said Wingate in a low voice, "it wouldn't do. It wouldn't fit in. God knows I would like to do it. I'd like to pump him full of lead all by myself; but I can't. What'd happen if we left him lyin' riddled here in the road? All the soft people in this here country would be sheddin' tears for him. He'd get nothin' but sympathy. No; we'll accuse him of murder. That sheriff will have to haul in his horns on this proposition."

The men, grumbling, took their hands from their guns.

"Take me to the sheriff, then," Bob said. "The sooner I'm out of your company the better I'll like it."

"We'll take you down there in the morning," Wingate said. "I'm takin' no chances on bein' held up by that gang you got back of you. You probably planned this murder, and when you don't show up at the house, they will be out lookin' for you."

"I wish they'd find me about now," Bob said.

"You'll be full of wishes from now on, I'm thinkin'," Wingate retorted. "Ride in front of us."

Bob rode ahead perforce. At his house Wingate ushered him inside, and the men went to the bunk house.

"Ain't you takin' an awful chance?" Bob jeered. "You better call two or three of those boys back to help you guard me."

"I'll guard you," Wingate said. "I'll put a bullet into your heart if you make a move."

"I believe you," Bob said.

"Go through that door there."

Bob passed through a door ahead of him. Wingate followed. Bob sent his eyes swiftly about the room, to discover if there was anything which might aid him to escape. He found he was in what was apparently Wingate's sleeping room. His eyes at length went to an old bureau in one corner. There was a lamp burning on it and to one side of the lamp was a picture. A cry of rage broke from Bob's lips, and he took a forward step, his fingers clutching for the picture. It was a photograph of Mona MacLaren. That Wingate should possess such a picture enraged Bob.

"Stop it," Wingate, behind him, commanded.

Bob faced about. His face was white, and his whole body shook. A bitter anger and a hate as bitter were ruling him.

"Some day, Wingate, I'll make you pay for having that picture," he said. "It's—it's a sacrilege."

Wingate backed away, his gun held a little above his hip.

"Resent it, then," he said.

Bob measured the distance between them. He knew he could not leap across it in time. Wingate would knock him down with a bullet. So he stood there, shaking, white-faced.

"Sit down," Wingate ordered, indicating a chair.

Bob could only sit down. Wingate moved as if he were going to take another chair. As he did so he transferred his gun from his right hand to his left. Then he suddenly turned on Bob and struck him with all his strength on the side of the jaw. Bob was knocked from the chair and fell in a heap in a corner. He struggled to rise; but had to lie back till his brain cleared. The blow had rendered him all but unconscious.

He lay there for some minutes after his brain began to function again. He knew that he was helpless now, but he swore to himself that he would make Wingate pay for this and for other things. And he wondered that he was so icily cold in mind and body; he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought he should be flaming with anger, and he knew that his resolve was all the more deadly because of his coldness.

He rose at length and got back to the chair and sat down in it. He no longer cared what Wingate did. Wingate might strike him again, strike him till he beat him into unconsciousness; but that would make no difference. Wingate did not intend to kill him. He would go on living, and then would come his chance to get even with Wingate.

So he lifted cold, disinterested eyes to Wingate's face. Wingate seemed to be taken aback by what he saw in those eyes. He stared in fascination. But Bob knew that he could always be depended upon to bluff, and now he bluffed.

"You've got enough," he stated. "I can see it in your face. I just wanted to show you what I think of you. I pack a pretty good punch, don't I?"

Bob gave no sign of assent. He had his own thoughts. Everything seemed simple now. He would make Wingate face him alone, and then Wingate should see how good his punch was.

Wingate sat looking at him for a while and then he left the room. The stony expression on Bob's face seemed to puzzle Wingate. He sent two men to guard Bob. In the morning, without offering Bob breakfast, Wingate and three other men started with him for the jail by a roundabout way.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLACK BOX.

THEY were about halfway to town when they heard a horseman coming behind them. Wingate stopped the men and turned in his saddle. The man drew near to them at a leisurely pace. Bob recognized him as Weaver before Wingate did. Wingate sat his horse, a frown of annoyance between his eyes. He dropped an oath when he saw who the man was.

"You fellas throw your guns on him when he gets here," he ordered. "I don't know what he thinks he's going to do, but we won't take any chances. He's picked up our trail somehow. Probably went to my place just on a hunch when this guy didn't come home last night."

Weaver came up to them with a grin on his lips. He paid no attention to Wingate and his men, though he must have seen that the men sat with drawn guns.

"Why, hello, Bob," he said. "Where you been all night? I been lookin' all over the country for you. Are you goin' to town? Well, I'll go with you. Come along."

"He won't come along," Wingate said. "He's goin' with us. He's our prisoner."

Weaver stared at him as if he saw him for the first time. His eyes then went to the other men.

"Prisoner?" he repeated. "What you all talkin' about, Wingate? How could you an' this bunch of coyotes of yours make a man like Bob Clifford your prisoner? Come on, Bob. Let's move."

"You got a fine sense of humor, ain't you?" Wingate snarled out. "Well, get out of the way or we'll put you out. You can't interfere in this thing. We're on our way to the county jail."

"Oh, I see," said Weaver. "Bein' kind of dumb, I didn't understand. Well, I just go along with you."

"We don't need your company."

"I'll go ahead of you, then, or I'll go behind you. I'll go any way you want me to go. You can't hardly expect to keep me from goin' to town, can you, Wingate?"

Wingate looked up and down the road. He seemed to think that Weaver was altogether too joyous. Was this a trap? That apparently was what Wingate was debating.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You got men hidden by the roadside up here?" he asked.

"Not me! I'm all by my lonesome."

"What are you doing on this road?"

"This road? Gosh, I've ridden this road before. I've ridden every road into and out of these mountains. In fact I've ridden places where there ain't no roads. Take me by and large, I am the dong-gonedest fella to go ridin' places ever you saw. Just now I am ridin' into town. I got business there."

"You'll just ride among us," Wingate said. "Come up here. If any of Clifford's men attempt to rush us, you will be the first to tumble from your saddle."

"Clifford's men? Gosh, all Clifford's men is workin'. You think Clifford is runnin' a dude ranch? He ain't. His men works every day. In fact they are prob'ly the hardest-workin' outfit that——"

"Oh, close your trap," Wingate growled out. "Ride up here."

"Anything to oblige, just so long as I get to town to 'tend to my business," Weaver said.

"We'll take your gun, too," said Wingate. "What you got in that package?"

"That is a box of writin' paper that I am sending to my sweetheart," Weaver answered. "She hasn't been writin' to me as reg'lar as she should, and I thought mebbe she had run out of paper."

The men laughed harshly, and Wingate stared at Weaver's placid face. "I wonder how it is that they let a thing like you go on livin'," he said.

"I've wondered about that my own self," Weaver returned, earnestly.

One of the men had taken his gun and, nursing his package, he rode just ahead of two of them and just behind two others.

"Where are we goin' now?" Weaver asked when they had reached the outskirts of town.

"To the jail," Wingate snapped out.

"That's fine," Weaver said. "Mebbe that sheriff will gimme a cigar. It's about time I smoked a cigar. Y'see, cigarettes gets tame with me about every so often an' I just hate to have a cigar to——"

"Will you stop your chatter?" Wingate demanded.

"Who? Me? Why, sure. I was just tryin' to be sociable."

On the threshold of the sheriff's office with Bob and Weaver ahead of him and his men behind him, Wingate halted. Clifford was seated before the sheriff's desk. He had his feet on the desk; he was pulling at his pipe contentedly, and fanning himself with his Stetson. He eyed Wingate with what seemed to be only a mild degree of interest.

"Where's the sheriff?" Wingate demanded.

"Why, he is eatin' his breakfast," Clifford returned. "He just got in from some place a while ago. Me and him was ridin' last night. We was out on a peculiar errand. It got cool in the night, didn't it? Or mebbe you wasn't up, Mr. Wingate. Anyway it looks like the day would be hot enough. It has been the dryest——"

"Great heavens!" Wingate exclaimed. "What's the matter with you fellas this mornin'? You are as full of talk as any men ever I saw."

"It's funny, Mr. Clifford," Weaver broke in. "Wingate don't want to be sociable on this here bright an' shinin' mornin'. I tried to entertain him while we was comin' along, and he had me shut my trap. I don't understand how a man can carry a grouch like that. Anybody would think that he thought I was tryin' to kid him."

"You can't kid me," Wingate stormed.

"Course not. Who would try?"

"Shut up, then."

"Well, I ain't got no cigar," Weaver rattled on. "I will go out on the steps and smoke a cigarette."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You will stay where you are," Wingate declared.

Weaver had turned and started for the door. Now he wheeled back. All the pleasantry was gone from his face. His parted lips were drawn tight and his eyes glowed.

"Who's goin' to keep me where I am?" he asked. "You, Wingate? Why, you poor cow, you make one move toward stoppin' me and I will tear you to pieces. Come right to it. What do you think you are doin'—runnin' this whole show?"

Wingate started back, his hand going to the butt of his gun.

"Drag it out," Weaver said sneeringly, "and then take one of Clifford's bullets an' see how much it will burn you."

Wingate glanced toward Clifford. The old cattleman had taken his feet from the desk and put his hat on his head. His hand was against his right side.

"You heard what he said, Wingate," Clifford snapped out.

Wingate seemed to decide that a sheriff's office would be a poor place for gun play with a man like Clifford. He sank into a chair and when Weaver stepped through the door he offered no objection. Clifford's anger seemed to die out of him as Weaver withdrew. He got to his feet and crossed to Wingate and stood before him.

"You an' me ain't never had a talk, Wingate," he said. "Suppose you just step outside a minute. I might have something to say to you that would interest you."

Wingate glanced at Clifford's gun. He appeared to suspect that there was a trick in the old man's sudden change of front.

"You needn't worry about my gun," Clifford said softly. "I ain't goin' to make no move toward it, unless, of course, you should go for yours, an' that ain't at all likely. Course if you are afraid to step out into the sunshine with me——" He finished with an opened-handed gesture of dismissal of the whole affair.

"I'll go with you," Wingate said.

Bob walked to the window and stood there, watching his father and Wingate as they stood on the steps.

"Just why are you bringin' my boy here?" he heard his father ask.

"I'm accusin' him of murder," Wingate answered stiffly.

"Well, if I was you I wouldn't do that," Clifford said. "Now, look here just——"

He launched into a harangue on the folly of neighbors quarreling as the Wingate and Clifford outfits had been doing. He cited several instances which had come to his attention in former years of deadly results ensuing from such situations. Wingate, his wonder seeming to grow with each sentence the old man spoke, stood with his eyes glued to Clifford's face. Bob was sure he did not notice Weaver when Weaver came around the corner of the building.

Weaver had a black box in his hand. Bob grinned, and then the grin suddenly died. Weaver need not have gone to the trouble of taking Wingate's picture. Bob was not going to send him on his errand now. He would deal with Wingate in another way.

He watched without interference, however, while Weaver lounged out to the curb and turned toward the two men on the step. He held the box against his chest and stared down at it.

"Hey, Wingate," he suddenly called.

Wingate turned a little, lifted his head, and stared into the camera. Sam moved his thumb and straightened up, hugging the black box under his arm.

"I wanted to get Mr. Clifford's picture, Wingate," Sam said smoothly. "You was in the way."

Wingate stared at him. Then his hand went to his gun. Before he could draw it, Clifford's gun came out and was thrust into his ribs.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't do that, Wingate," he said. "What! Right here on the steps of the jail with people lookin' at us?"

"Was he taking my picture?" Wingate cried.

"Who? Weaver? Gosh, there is never any tellin' about what Weaver is doin'. He is about the craziest puncher that ever forked a horse. He is as likely to——"

"He's leaving," Wingate said. "Stop him. I want to talk to him."

"He wouldn't stop for me," Clifford declared. "That is a peculiar thing about Weaver. When he gets started, he is the dog-gondest man to stop that ever——"

"He said he had writing paper in that package."

"'Nother of Weaver's peculiarities. He can't remember from one minute to the next. He is likely to wrap up a camera and think he has got anything else in the world in the package, ten seconds afterward. You just got to put up with his peculiar ways, Wingate. I have to all along, and I reckon you can for one day."

Wingate opened his lips to speak, but he was interrupted from behind.

"Ain't this kind of wild stuff to be pullin' right on the steps of my jail?" the sheriff asked.

"Oh, me an' Wingate was just foolin'," Clifford said. "Weaver got hold of a camera some place, and he is tryin' to take pictures of everything in sight. You know how Weaver is. When he gets started on a thing there ain't no stoppin' him. From now on he will be blowin' all his wages on films for his camera."

"Thass right," the sheriff agreed. "Weaver is peculiar."

"Just what I been tellin' Wingate," said Clifford cheerfully. "Well, Wingate has got some more business for you. He is here to charge my boy with murderin' somebody. Have you got time to listen to him now?"

"I'm pretty busy to take up a little thing like that," the sheriff said, "but I reckon we better get it over with. Walk right in, Mr. Wingate, and let us hear what you have to say."

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT WEAVER SAW.

THEY went inside, and Bob looked at the sheriff in surprise. He had not expected that official to believe Wingate's story, but he had hardly looked for this careless attitude.

"Well, let's have your story about this murder, Wingate," the sheriff ordered. "Make it snappy, too. I been up the better part of the night, and I'm tired."

"This man here——" Wingate began, nodding toward one of his men.

"Identify him," said the sheriff.

"Why, his name is Pintar," Wingate said. "He——"

"New man in these parts," the sheriff interrupted. "Where does he hail from?"

"Hail from?" Wingate, taken aback, repeated. "Where do you hail from, Pintar?"

"Who? Me? Why, I worked in the State of Washington a while back."

"Where's your home?" the sheriff snapped out.

"Oklahoma."

"What part?"

Pintar ran his hand across his small, uncertain eyes. Under cover of the hand he looked at Wingate.

"I don't see what all this has got to do with a charge of murder," Wingate said.

"I do," the sheriff retorted. "Whereabouts in Oklahoma, fella."

"Why, I worked in the oil fields out of Tulsa," Pintar answered.

"Thought you was a cow-puncher."

"I am. Danged if I ain't. I done other things besides, too."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sheriff studied the man in silence for a space. Then he turned to Wingate.

"This guy's kind of a floatin' kid, I'm thinkin'," he said. "I don't know as his word would stack up any too strong with a jury in this man's country. He your witness?"

"This ain't a grand jury session," Wingate snarled out. "Do you want to hear the story or not? I don't have to tell it to you."

"Why, shoot it," said the sheriff complacently.

"This man was workin' up in the meadows——" Wingate began.

"Herdin' sheep?"

"Yes. He——"

"Oil man, cow-puncher, sheep-herder. Quite a diversified kind of a guy, ain't he?"

"He was doing his work, anyhow," Wingate said. "He was standing a short distance from Clifford when——"

"You mean Bob?"

"Well, Bob. Bob wasn't far away from Pintar when he up and put a bullet into Cooper, who was beyond Pintar. The bullet must have got Cooper in a vital part, for he tumbled over the edge and went bangin' down into the cañon. I expect his body is still there. I thought it best not to disturb it. I thought you ought to go out for it, so you could see from he way it is layin' just how the man tumbled down into the cañon."

"Pintar, you will swear that Bob Clifford fired the bullet that killed that guy, huh?"

"I'll swear to it," Pintar answered, though, under the sheriff's steady scrutiny, his eyes wavered down.

"You was standin' in one place and Cooper was standin' in another and Bob was standin' in a third when Bob just naturally shot Cooper. That it?"

"That's it. I ain't never seen a more cold-blooded crime in all my days."

"And I expect you've seen some," the sheriff said. "Only two shots was fired?"

"Only two shots."

"'S funny," said the sheriff, "that that guy Campbell insists that there was three shots. He showed me a place where a bullet had freshly buried itself in the logs of the cabin. That's one thing I don't understand."

"Campbell told you?" Wingate asked, and Bob saw his face pale a little.

"Yeah," the sheriff went on. "Campbell is a guy that Clifford has up in the meadows. Him and Sam Weaver has been side partners up there. Both Campbell and Weaver states that Bob didn't fire a shot till after somebody else had fired two shots. Bob was up in them meadows all right. Ain't no dispute about that. Weaver was up there, too, but he left before this fracas took place. I dunno what business he was on or how he happened to be coming down toward the road when he caught sight of a man goin' up towards the meadows. This here guy was on the prowl, Weaver said. He said he was goin' along in a kind of a sneakin' way like he had some errand to do that he wouldn't have want shouted from the mountain peaks.

"Well, Weaver he up an' followed him. Weaver is a peculiar cuss that a way. He will butt in on things that he prob'ly ain't got no right to butt in on.

"Right where this guy starts to climb up, there is a stretch of trees, runnin' from the road clean up the top of them hills. If you stand back from it, it looks like a green furrow plowed into the brown of the hillside. Weaver says he told himself that it was funny that this guy was disappearin' in among them trees and then comin' out again like he was dodgin' somethin' when there wasn't nothin' to dodge.

"When he got about halfway up, Weaver lost sight of him altogether. It was night, y'understand, and the seein' wasn't none too good. It kind of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

puzzled Weaver. He thought mebbe the man had found he was bein' followed and had dodged back. Weaver knowed that things hasn't been normal in this neck o' the woods for some few days, and he says to himself that he will go down and come up beyond. If the guy has gone back, he may run into him, and if he has gone on up, he can catch him before he gets over to where Bob and Campbell is, if it so happens he is lookin' for them two gents.

"Well, there is an arroyo where Sam comes down, and he starts up this. He has gone mebbe twenty, twenty-five feet when he hears a kind of a soft, rollin' kind of a sound up above him. He looks up and he sees that some objec' is tumbling down toward him. Sam says he don't know now whether he heard any shot or not. He was some startled by seein' this here thing hustlin' down his way. Later—an' we might as well put that in here—he heard two shots. Funny your man didn't hear them, Wingate."

"Weaver isn't certain about the one shot," Wingate said craftily. "Mebbe my man got confused when he saw Cooper murdered and doesn't remember about the other shots."

"You are entirely welcome to that loophole," the sheriff went on, too amiably. "Well, this here objec' that was tumblin' down toward Weaver proved to be a man. I expect it was your man Cooper, Wingate, for I don't reckon two men was killed up in them peaceful mountains last night. Cooper we'll say he was. He lands at Weaver's feet. There ain't nothin' he can do for the fella, for that bullet killed him right off'n the reel.

"Weaver waits a bit to see what more may happen, and then he takes Cooper's body and carries it up the arroyo for quite some distance and covers it up with branches from a tree and leaves it there. Then he rides right down here to my jail and tells me about it. Me and him start back, and on the way we stop in and pick up Clifford. We done our work pretty stealthy, bringin' the body back here on a horse that we borrowed from Clifford. We took the body over to Hopwood's and we called old Doc Mills over there to make one of these post mortems. Doc done it, too."

The sheriff stopped, took a cigar from his pocket, scrutinized it with disfavor in his eyes, but lighted it nevertheless. Then he sat back and looked at Wingate.

Wingate did not look at the sheriff. He was staring toward the door. Bob noticed a curious, nervous twitching of his upper lip. Except for that his face was impassive. There was a long silence. Then Wingate spoke without looking at any of them.

"I've taken my time to think your story over, sheriff," he said. "It sounds all right. I haven't of course checked up on the time that Weaver was there, but if you have Cooper's body he must have been there as he says."

"Oh, he was there," the sheriff said. "No question about that." He turned in his chair so that he could look at Bob. "Bob," he said, "Wingate held you a prisoner in his house all night, didn't he?"

"The latter part of the night."

"You got any charge to make against him?"

"Charge against me?" Wingate cried, half rising from his chair.

"Did he abuse you some, Bob?" the sheriff asked softly. "You got a welt on the side of your jaw as if you had been walloped there. The reason why I ask is that I am still sheriff of this county, though some folks may not think so. I don't take none too kindly to havin' other folks grab my work away from me."

"Why, no," Bob said, "he didn't abuse me. We got along first rate."

"You listen to me, Wingate," the sher-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

iff said, and there was the red of anger in his old cheeks now. "You have been playin' a pretty high-handed game around here. Before you come here everything was all ca'm an' peaceful. The minute you established yourself a reg'lar riot breaks out. It don't look none too good to me. If you think you can come in here and raise this kind of Cain you got another think comin'. I have knowed Clifford here many years. I don't have to explain about him. Bob is younger, and he has been away for the last year and a half. But his reputation has always been of the best. He's been the pride of this county for the way he could handle a horse. You don't expect me to sit by and see the pride of our county humbled in the dust, do you? Not on your life! If need be, I can resign this sheriff's job and take to the saddle with old Clifford here. If him an' me ever do that you will think the devil himself is ridin' down the wind. We have seen some troublous times first an' last, an' we ain't too old to mix in some more. You understand me?"

Before Clifford could reply to that, Bob stepped forward. He had been studying Wingate, and the more he studied him the faster grew his hate. His heart was hot with it. He wanted to come to grips with this man at once.

He knew that the sheriff had another card to play, the final, deciding card. He would not be locked in a cell. He would be free, and he wanted Wingate to be free. Then there would be that meeting when they would be alone, man to man.

"You're not going to detain me, are you, sheriff?" he asked.

"Certainly not. I'm going to be too busy huntin' the man that killed this here Cooper."

Wingate turned on Bob furiously now.

"You're not going to get off so easy," he cried. "The sheriff hasn't the final say in this thing. I'll swear to a warrant for you."

Bob's nails dug into the palms of his hands as he fought his anger back. He must not spring upon Wingate here. There were too many men present. He and Wingate would be separated. He and Wingate stood glaring at each other.

"Go ahead and get your warrant, Wingate," the sheriff interposed. "I will be arrestin' somebody for this murder before long, and you can't hold Bob Clifford for a minute."

"Why can't I?"

The sheriff turned suddenly on Pintar. His old face held a savage look before which the "diversified" man retreated. The sheriff fixed him with a gnarled finger.

"You saw this shootin'," the sheriff said. "You saw Cooper and Bob Clifford facin' each other an' you saw Bob Clifford shoot Cooper. That's it, ain't it?"

"Why, that's it," Pintar agreed.

The sheriff swiftly relaxed, and he laughed.

"Liar," he said. "The doc's post mortem showed somethin' entirely different. This here Cooper was shot from behind. The bullet plowed up through his body from the small of his back. The man that shot him wasn't facin' him at all. He was behind and below him. Well, Wingate?"

CHAPTER XVII.

NO CHARGE.

BOB CLIFFORD had been standing apart while this drama had been enacted, but he had not felt himself outside of it. Rather he had felt himself more closely drawn into it than if he had been an active participant in it. He could see the value of it more clearly than if he had been heated by the argument back and forth. It all whirled about him, and yet he had the cold detachment of the observer.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He understood, as the sheriff had seemed to mean that they should all understand, that Wingate had tried again to blacken his reputation by trickery, and by that trickery to deprive him of his liberty, and so, possibly, to end his life.

Wingate had failed through the intelligence and resourcefulness of Sam Weaver and that other Sam, the sheriff. Yet his failure only increased Bob's loathing of him. If Bob had been locked up on a charge of murder, he would have had to think of that. His rage and resentment then would have had a kind of helplessness—that helplessness which comes to a man of action when he is rendered powerless to act. Now he could think very clearly, and his thinking only served to strengthen his resolution. Sending Weaver to back track over Wingate's old trails became a puerile thing to do. Bob only retained a desire to smash into Wingate and battle with him on the plane on which men battled when they had disputes to settle. As matters were going, Wingate had him at a disadvantage. Wingate could resort to tricks to which Bob could not resort. Bob would never know what the man would do next.

In the little time he had spent here, watching the progress of the game which the sheriff and Wingate had been playing, he had felt his mental horizon lift and widen. Till he had joined the rangers he had hardly had a day of responsibility. The work which he had done on his father's ranch had been whatever work he liked to do. It had chiefly been with the horses. He had an uncanny ability to make horses do his will. He understood them and they seemed to understand him. He could be gentle and firm with them at the same time.

He had been a star at the annual round-up in town. Two years before this autumn he had listened to the plaudits of the vast throng when he had got a leg up on the trophy. He had not been able to follow up his success because he had been in the service when the next round-up was held, but he had meant to come to the show this year. There was a horse, now ranging somewhere in the horse-heaven country, which no man had kept seat upon. He had been going to try again with that horse. He often dreamed of the stir and the bustle and the movement and the color of the show, when the town's population would be increased tenfold by the great influx of visitors.

But all this seemed as nothing now. Indeed something of vaster value, of greater significance in his life, appeared to have passed out of his consciousness. That was his love for Mona MacLaren. He had once thought that nothing could thrust that aside, but now his hate for Wingate had even shouldered that out of the field of his emotions. He was a man with but a single purpose, and therefore he was a dangerous man. For the first time in his life he had a complete obsession, and that was to get his hands on the man he despised.

This was Bob's mood as the sheriff ceased speaking, and Bob turned to Wingate, rather idly, to see what he would do. He would lie, evade, accuse anew; it made no difference. Nothing he could say or do now would make any difference.

Wingate seemed to see that he must act swiftly. His eyes had widened as he had heard the sheriff come to his climax, and now he turned those wide eyes on Pintar.

"How is this?" he asked thickly.

Bob switched his eyes to Pintar's face, and he was amused by the incredulous look which swept into Pintar's dull eyes. The man hadn't much intelligence. Wingate must be depending upon Pintar's fear of him to prevent Pintar from blurting out the truth. And so it seemed to be. Pintar, for a time, struggled with his amazement, but at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

length a cunning look crept into his face. It was a look of gratification, too, as if Pintar were surprised and delighted that he was able to think of the thing he was being called upon to think of.

"Why, boss," he said, "I told you just what I thought I saw. I give it to you straight. Ain't it a fact that I seen this here Bob Clifford up there? Why, I seen him goin' up there. You had sent me to lend a hand to Cooper if Cooper should need it. To the best of my knowledge this here Clifford shot Cooper. Well, I dunno. This here Weaver says he don't know about the first shot. Mebbe I got mixed up on what I saw, too. Everything come suddenlike, y'know. I ain't aimin' to do no injustice to no man, but I felt I had to go back to your place an' tell you what happened, the way it seemed to me. An' that is all I can say."

Wingate rose, shrugging his shoulders. Bob saw that he was trying to act as if disgust were ruling him. He faced the sheriff.

"I reckon there is nothing more to be said or done," he stated. "The fact that Cooper was shot from behind shows that Pintar was mistaken. Come on, Pintar. We better be gettin' back. There is plenty for us to do."

"You got all the time there is," the sheriff said, rising also. "Lookit, Wingate. This here whole business smells to high heaven, an' you know it as well as I do. I don't get to the bottom of this shootin' myself. Bob didn't shoot Cooper, an' it don't stand to reason that one of your men did it. Who did do it, then? It's my opinion that somebody was out to get Bob Clifford. Seems to me they would have got him up there if they had been tryin' hard enough. Why didn't they get him? He was in the position that a decent man is always in when he is bein' pursooed by a crook. All the odds was against him. I swear I can't figure it out."

"You'd hardly expect me to figure it out, then, would you?" Wingate come back sneeringly.

"That's just about what I would do," the sheriff flared up. "Successful figurin' always comes when a man has the inside dope, and to my way of thinkin' you have got the inside dope. I think you got the inside dope on the poisoning of them sheep, on the attempted attack on Bob Clifford in his own home, and on the killin' of Cooper."

"Do something about it," Wingate invited.

"I——" The sheriff paused. Bob knew what had halted him. The sheriff saw that he had been about to boast and to threaten. Boasting and threatening, except in a jocose way, were alien to him. Bob had seen him the worst of braggarts, threatening in a most menacing manner; but at those times there had always been a glint of laughter in his eyes. Now he was in deadly earnest. "I'll do something," he veered off. "I'm sendin' a man this afternoon to ride with your outfit, Wingate, and *two* men to ride with Clifford's. I'm tellin' you you better show the well-known hospitality of the West to that man when he hits your ranch. You will be responsible for him. If any harm comes to him from any source you can be all set to explain about it to me."

"That's legal, is it?" Wingate demanded.

"Legal, the devil!" the sheriff exclaimed, carried out of himself. "Do you want it the other way? When I go down the street in this here town from now on, or when I go ridin' over the country, men will be stoppin' me—old men mostly, mind you, men like Jake Clifford here! And them men will be sayin' to me: 'Look here, Sam. What's all this we're hearin' about sheep an' shootin'? What's all this we're hearin' about this guy Wingate tryin' to herd ride Jake Clifford? Ain't there nobody in this county with nerve no

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more? Whyn't you gettin' up a posse, Sam, and findin' out about all this here undercover work?' You want some of that, Wingate? You want a couple score of them men ridin' through the country with guns slung on them? It has been quite a spell since such a thing has took place hereabouts, but when it does take place, it means a little bit of red Hades. You get them old fellas stirred up, get their blood to runnin' like it used to run in the old days when things wasn't so ca'm an' sweet as they generally are now, and you will see everything tore up by its roots before they get through."

Through this philippic Wingate had shifted from one foot to the other, and his face had paled slowly till now, beneath its tan, it held a sick look.

"I will do what I can to see that no harm comes to your man," he said. "Is that all?"

"It's all I got to say," the sheriff answered, wiping his bald head. "You got any charge to make against this man or Pintar, Bob?"

"None!"

The question had startled Bob. Everything had been going just as he wanted it to go. Oh, no, he did not want to disturb the smooth running of events by making any charges against Wingate. He wanted Wingate to walk out of the jail a free man. Therefore the word had shot from his lips with more emphasis than he had meant to put upon it.

Wingate turned and stared at him, as if he sought to gather from his rejection of the sheriff's invitation what he had in his mind. He might think, Bob saw, that Bob was so glad that he himself was to escape that he would freely let the whole matter drop. Let him think that if he liked! So Bob evaded his glance and looked out of the window, giving Wingate an opportunity to study his face without having to meet Bob's eyes. A little smile which might mean anything played across Bob's lips.

"Come on, Pintar," Wingate said.

"My man will be up to your place this afternoon," the sheriff said. "Take good care of him."

Wingate said nothing more. He and Pintar went on into the street.

"You got a deck of cards up to your place, ain't you, Jake?" the sheriff asked Bob's father.

"Why, yes."

"When my two boys gets up there give them the deck of cards an' put 'em in the bunk house," the sheriff said. "They will be right there, playin' cards, any time you want them."

"All right, Sam," Clifford said. "Let's get along, Bob."

"Where did Weaver go?" Bob asked, outside.

"Why, he went to Oklahoma on that errand of yours," Clifford answered. "He said you wanted him to go, and I give him the money. He had just about time to catch a train for Portland after he took Wingate's picture."

It was an unnecessary expense, Bob knew, but it didn't matter. They started toward home in silence, and maintained the silence till they came to MacLaren's ranch. Bob did not want to see Mona in his present mood, and he spurred forward, with his father following him, as they were about to pass the house. Apparently, however, Mona had known they were at least in town and had been watching for their return. She ran toward them from the kitchen and hailed Bob. He could do no less than stop. Clifford rode on out of earshot and waited for Bob.

"What has happened, Bob?" Mona asked, and though her tone was quiet, Bob saw that it was so only through an effort of her will.

As always, Bob's impulse toward her was to spare her. He had seen that she had something on her mind. Since he had decided that there had been more

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behind the sending of her note to him than the mere wish to bring him home to aid his father, though that would have been sufficient for a girl like her, he had wondered what had been troubling her. He had not guessed what it was, but he didn't want to add anything to it now.

"Oh, father and I had some business in town," he said. "We were just going home."

Never in the old days had he ridden near her home without stopping, but she did not accuse him on that account now. She merely searched his eyes, and he saw that she was very serious, too serious to think of being offended by his neglect, even if there had not been the constraint between them which had lain there for more than a year and a half.

"I know what your business was," she said. "It's pretty generally known by this time. We have had several telephone calls and some people have stopped in to talk it over. Everybody is wanting to know who this man Wingate is and what he means by the way he has been acting. You know how feeling rolls along till it takes on a good size, like a snowball. Well, they are getting stirred up. Father says they are slower than they used to be, but he thinks that in the end posses will be out to ride over the country. Once they get to going, father says the whole country will be aflame. What I meant when I asked you what had happened was what was the result of your—er—visit to the sheriff."

"Oh, Wingate had cooked up a story," Bob said, "but it wouldn't hold together. A man named Cooper was killed and Wingate accused me, but the sheriff, dad, and Weaver had got Cooper's body and they found that Cooper had been shot in the back while Wingate's man said I had been facing Cooper. For some reason Wingate is intent on riding me, but so far he hasn't got very far."

"Have you guessed what causes Wingate's enmity toward you, Bob?" she asked quietly.

A flush burning his cheeks, Bob looked away from her. Gone entirely was the old comradeship between them. In its place had come the complexity of a deeper regard, at least on his part. He knew that even if she felt no such regard for him, her attitude toward him was affected by his own feeling. He was sounding depths which he had not known existed, and he had a strange notion that she was only watching him, wondering.

Yet he could not tell her, as he suspected, that she herself was the cause of Wingate's enmity. He could not, for instance, tell her about the picture on Wingate's bureau. He could not put the thought into words, especially in her presence.

"Oh, I reckon Wingate is just a mean cuss," he evaded.

"No!" She paused on the word so long that she forced him to look at her. "Wingate wants me to marry him, Bob," she concluded.

"Well, let's not talk about that," he said in a throaty voice.

"I have been hoping I wouldn't have to tell you," she went on with a kind of relentlessness in her tone. "First he tried to sweep me off my feet by his stories of his wealth. Then he tried to pose as a kind, gentle man. His last move was to seize me and kiss me. I struck him."

Bob Clifford seemed to suffer a sort of collapse in his saddle. He stared down at her, and there was horror in his eyes. Yet when he spoke, it was not to break out against Wingate but against himself; and he did that dully, inadequately.

"Like me," he said. "Do you mean—like me!"

She clutched his nerveless hand and held it.

"No, no, Bob," she pleaded. "Not

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like you. That—that was different. You and I—we had known each other so long."

She looked as if she were going to burst into tears, and he had never seen her cry even when, a little girl, she had suffered the slight injuries which playtime brings. She was tearing him to pieces, so great was his affection for her. He had suffered because he had once given way to an impulse, an impulse which, God knew, had had no taint in it, but which she had cruelly misunderstood.

But even now, with a rare sense of justice, he would take no solace from the fact of her setting him apart. He thought she was only being lenient in the stress of the moment. He would not recall to her that she had passionately declared she hated him, never wanted to see him again; that he had ruthlessly torn down the fine structure of their friendship.

So he put that away and reacted at once, with all the power of no slight nature, to what she accused Wingate of.

"Never mind," he said. "I'm sorry you *had* to tell me, but I'm glad you did tell me. I—I will make sure that Wingate doesn't do it again. I see that was one of the reasons you called me back home. Wasn't that one of the reasons?"

"There were so many reasons why you should be here," she said.

He forced himself to calmness. About her he threw the mantle of his protection, as he had thrown it ever since either of them could remember. A picture of her as a little girl in short dresses, with flying, jet black hair, came to him.

"Well, never mind, Mona," he said. "Don't think anything more about this guy. He won't be hard to handle. Coward at bottom, you know. He's been makin' some desperate plays, but we will throw a rope on him now and tie him up. Nothing to worry about. Not a thing. You just forget it!"

She had had, in those old days, a queer way of flashing out at him and telling him what she thought of him. Those had been the slight storms which had made the fair weather of their friendship seem all the brighter. She flashed out at him now.

"I'm not thinking about myself," she said. "I'm thinking about you. I brought you back here, and in that way I'm responsible. You are in danger. You will have to look sharp to protect yourself. You can't fight this out alone. What are you going to do about that?"

Well, he'd be dogged if his luck wasn't holding. This here Sheriff Sam was a wise old head, now, wasn't he? He had fixed things, all unwillingly, so that Bob could meet this situation and still go on as he had planned.

"Oh, that's all taken care of, Mona," he said with a smile. "The sheriff has got tired of all these ructions and he has taken a hand. He is sending two men out to our place this afternoon and one man to Wingate's. Neither side will be able to make a move from now on without the sheriff's knowin' about it. That'll satisfy you, won't it?"

What she thought he did not know. She kept her eyes on his face for a space before she turned back toward the house.

"Bob," she said, "be careful, won't you?"

"I'll be careful," he said.

He watched her till she gained the door and half expected she would turn there to wave her hand as had been her custom. But she only went on into the house.

"Gosh," said Bob Clifford to himself. "I wonder if I was to ride straight for the next ten-twenty years if I could get her back to where her and me used to be. I wonder! I'd be willin' to wait!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TORCH.

AT four o'clock that afternoon three men stopped in the road in front of Clifford's house. Bob had not left the house since he had returned from town. Clifford had sent a man to take Weaver's place and then he had ridden off to the wheat fields. The men were coming the next day to help with the wheat harvest and Clifford had got the combine ready. The old man was always careful of his machinery, and he had had the combine under shelter since the last season. He had always said he couldn't abide a man who left his machinery out in the weather.

Wheat had been an experiment with him five years back. He had begun with a small acreage, necessarily dry farming it, and gradually he had increased the acreage till now the whole six hundred and forty acres were covered with the golden crop. He had told Bob that he expected the yield would run about thirty-five bushel to the acre and that, with climbing prices, would run into money.

He had not returned when the sheriff's men were due to arrive, and Bob had been waiting for them. He waved his hand to them now, and they rode into the yard.

"Which two of you three hombres is goin' to honor this ranch?" Bob asked.

"Sam said for me and Royce to stay here," one of the men said. "Brill is goin' on to Wingate's."

"Well, get goin', Brill," Bob said. "We don't want you here."

"I'll git goin' when I'm good an' ready," Brill answered, grinning. "An' that will be about now. S'long, you two long legs. Keep your eye on this here Bob Clifford. I'm hearin' he is bad medicine now. Hoof it, hoss."

"Well, you two fellas can get down an' turn in them bags of bones of yours," Bob said. "I don't know what you will have for your suppers. There ain't no food on the place."

"Wisht I'd brought a lunch with me then," the man who had first spoken grumbled. "I might have knowed the kind of treatment we would get from this outfit."

They turned their horses in and stretched their legs.

"I don't reckon a three-handed game of stud would appeal to you boys, would it?" Bob asked.

"It ain't much of a game as far as playin' goes," said Gorman, the spokesman, "but I could win a little mebbe. If we have got to send to town for our food, we will need the money."

They went into the bunk house and Bob produced a deck of cards. The two deputies placed their guns on the table and Gorman said the game must be on the level, abs'lutely. It was not much of a game, the stakes being small, but Bob kept up a running fire of light talk. He wanted to throw these men off their guard. He knew that they were shrewd fellows, cow-punchers before they had been picked up by the sheriff. They would be wondering why he was so tame in the face of Wingate's accusation of him; and he wanted to make them feel that he had turned the whole affair over to them.

The men answered him in kind, indulging in all the mock abuse of the range, but Bob was aware, as he studied his cards from time to time, that they were scrutinizing him. This was more than a game of cards, then; it was a game of wits. The sheriff had doubtless told these men to look out for him. The sheriff would have a notion that Bob would make a play on his own account, and Bob felt that that was what the men were turning over in their minds.

"I'll be ridin' over to Doc MacLaren's along about seven o'clock," he said carelessly after a while.

"Why, that'd be fine," Royce said.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll ride over with you. I ain't been feelin' none too good lately, and I will get me a box of pills from the ol' doc. Ain't he one good fella, though? One time I sprained my ankle and he certainly took wonderful good care of me. I——"

"First ace bets," Bob, dealing, interrupted.

"It's my ace," said Royce. "I seen it as soon as you turned it up, an' I bet it is as if I had another one in the hole. I'll be ridin' with you over to Doc's. Don't forget that."

"Glad to have you go along," Bob said.

They dropped their badinage and played in silence for a while. Bob was casting about in his mind for some way by which he could elude Royce. His horse was in the corral. Saddle and bridle were ready. He was set to ride into the night toward Wingate's. That picture on the bureau was forever before his eyes; Mona's words resounded in his ears. He had to fight to keep a still, grave look from settling over his face. He was wholely at the mercy of his obsession.

"Huh!" said Royce at last. "This is a game for an old folks' home. Let's go out in the air. I understand you got some fine young hosses, Bob. Let's have a look at them."

They went out to the smaller corral and stood leaning on the bars. They were all lovers of horses, and they discussed the points of the youthful youngsters and ways of breaking them. They differed, as the best of horsemen do, and they were in a heated argument when the men and Clifford simultaneously arrived. Clifford had apparently prepared the men for the deputies' advent, for they heaped the most merciless abuse on the heads of those two officials.

As they were about to go in to supper, Bob wondered if he might not slip away, but he felt Royce's eyes on him, and the deputy waited till he made a move before he made one himself.

After supper they disposed themselves in front of the bunk house and smoked cigarettes and talked while the night settled down. Bob was watching his chance, but it did not come. One by one men drifted off to their bunks. At length only Bob and the deputies remained.

"Think I'll turn in," Bob said, rising.

"I got a nice job ahead of me," Royce said behind his hand as he yawned. "I got to sit up till mornin'. Then I'll rout Gorman out an' he will take the job. I will sleep to-morrow, I bet you."

"Oh, you don't need to stay up all night," Bob said. "That's nonsense."

"Yes, sir, it is," Royce agreed. "It is the dog-gonedest nonsense that ever nonsensed all over the mountaintops, but it is the sheriff's orders. He says to us that two eyes must be wide open every minute we are on this job, and them two eyes must belong to the same hombre. It wouldn't do, says he, for Gorman to keep one of his eyes open and me to keep one of mine. He says a pair of eyes divided up in that peculiar manner don't focus like they should. The sheriff is gettin' old, y'know, Bob, an' he gets the darndest notions. I expect he will land in a home for the feeble minded before long, but in the meantime he is the sheriff; an' you know that me an' Gorman has got the reputation of bein' the faithfulest deputies that ever depped. When the sheriff tells us to do a thing, it is better than done—that is, if it was to be done by somebody else. Now, there was that time when——"

"Good night!" Bob, forcing a grin, broke in. "If you have to sit up all night, it is your bad luck and none of mine. I'm not goin' to stand here and listen to your twaddle till the sun comes up. You are good deputies in your own minds all right, but consider them minds. Whew! Good night!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Good night to you, sir, and so say we all," Royce rejoined, while Gorman grinned. "May your rest be sweet and undisturbed by any intentions to walk in your sleep."

"You won't hear a creak out of me from now till dawn," Bob declared. "If Wingate and his outfit should descend on this hapless house in force, I expect you two heroes would take care of the whole bunch."

"There wouldn't be the slightest sound in the night," Royce said. "And so if you have spoke your piece, fella, slope!"

"I hope you both are lyin' dead in the mornin'," Bob said cheerfully.

"May you live to repent of your sins," Royce called after him as he moved away.

Bob went up to his room and sat down by the window. He would wait a while till everybody was asleep except Royce, and then Royce might drop off. If he did not, Bob would leave anyhow, forbidding the deputy to go with him. If Royce insisted upon going, Bob would ride forth and lead him a merry chase. He was sure his horse could distance Royce's.

From where he sat he could see the mountains dimly in the distance. They suddenly suggested eternity to him. Long before he had been here, long before Wingate had been here, those mountains had lifted their heads. They would endure long after he and Wingate had gone. Curious, he thought, that he had never considered them in that way before. All his life he had lived within view of them and this was the first time they had had any specific message for him. He had accepted them as part of the landscape as he accepted all this country, from its towns to its wildernesses.

He fidgeted in his chair. What was this thing that he planned to do? Beat up a man?

Bob half rose from his chair to start to pace the room, but he sank back into it quickly. Beyond the house a yellow light had fallen over the landscape. It seemed to be creeping nearer and nearer.

It could mean but one thing—fire!

Bob sprang from his chair now. There had been terrible forest fires this dry year. The property loss had been enormous. If a fire had started up among the trees, but a short time would be required to transform the forests into fiery furnaces.

Before Bob could take a step toward the door, there was a cry fom below his window. He leaned out. Royce was standing down there.

"Get a move on you," Royce cried, all the levity gone from his tone. "Somebody's used the torch. Your wheat is all in flames!"

As Bob withdrew his head, he saw the men come tumbling from the bunk house, pulling on their clothing. They started for the corral to get their horses.

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

OLD TRAPS

WORKMEN some time ago were clearing a site for a summer resort near Eagle River, Wisconsin. Under a stump near Ballard Lake they discovered a dozen otter and beaver traps which had been cached there forty years ago by Finn Lawler. Despite their long idleness, the traps were not much damaged by rust, and after they had been oiled they worked as well as ever.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sunflower Gold

By Reginald C. Barker

Author of "Grizzly Gallagher, Santa Claus," etc.

TEDDY BLAINE was busily splitting wood, and his wife, Hattie, was sowing seeds in the little patch of ground she devoted to the raising of flowers, when, early one morning, Grizzly Gallagher arrived at their little homestead at Lake-where-the-wind-never-blows.

"The winter is over," said Grizzly Gallagher. "The snow is gone and the chirp of the chickadee has given place to song of running water, for spring is here. How's the baby?"

"For the love of Mike, moderate that great voice of yours," implored Teddy. "Do you want to wake him up?"

"Sure do," beamed the old trapper. "Ain't seen him since he was knee high to a snowshoe rabbit. What do you suppose I came over for?"

"Probably so's you'd get a good square meal again," said Teddy, grinning, and laying down his ax. "Got a good excuse to show up now that the baby has arrived; haven't you?"

"I've got a better one, this time," announced Grizzly Gallagher mysteriously. "I've brought a present for Hattie. Something I've been saving up for a couple of years, but which I'd almost forgot. Guess."

"Smoked bear meat," hazarded Teddy.

"Always thinkin' of your stomach, ain't you, Teddy?" answered the old trapper. "But at that, you're wrong."

"I'll bet Grizzly found a little gold nugget for the baby," said Hattie. "He promised that he would go over to the old diggings on Carson's Luck and try to find one."

"The gold I've got is of a kind I never before found in all my forty-odd years in the big hills," said Grizzly, "and if any one had told me that I ever would find it, I wouldn't have believed 'em."

Fumbling in a pocket of his Mackinaw, he brought forth a small cotton sack and handed it to Hattie. Eagerly she untied the string of the sack and looked inside. It was half full of silver-gray seeds, each of the shape and about half the size of a bean, with a tiny white stripe running around the edge.

"Sunflower seeds!" she cried delightedly. "Why, Grizzly, mother must have sent them to me; for she is the only one in McCall that grows sunflowers."

"Wrong again," said Grizzly. "I found six or seven big sunflowers growing wild on the west slope of Sunset Mountain. How they came thar, the good Lord only knows. Maybe a bird carried the seeds, or maybe some wandering prospector had 'em with him and lost 'em. Anyhow, thar they stood, and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being nigh sundown, all their faces were turned toward the west."

"We'll plant them all around the cabin," promised Hattie, "and when they keep turning their faces toward the sun, I'll think they are watching over you, Grizzly, as you travel here and there among the hills."

As Hattie ceased speaking, from down the trail that led from McCall there sounded the tinkle of a pack-horse bell.

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher. "Getting purty popular, ain't you, since the baby came? First time I ever heard tell of a visitor to Lake-where-the-wind-never-blows."

"We are not expecting any one," stated Hattie. "I wonder who it can be."

"Probably a prospector heading in to the Middle Salmon," surmised Teddy, looking curiously at a stranger, who, leading a heavily laden pack horse, came slowly toward the homestead.

"Good morning," said the stranger, tipping a new felt hat. "I didn't know there was any one living at the lake."

"Thar wasn't up to a year or so ago, stranger," said Grizzly Gallagher. "Must have been some time since you were in here."

"Matter of seven years," stated the stranger. "My name is"—and he paused perceptibly, "Clem Traynor."

"This is the Blaine homestead," explained the old trapper, "and folks call me 'Grizzly' Gallagher."

Watching the stranger, Hattie felt intuitively that she did not like him. Just why, she could not have explained. Perhaps because his speech was too smooth; perhaps because his slaty eyes were set a little too close together and flickered uncertainly from place to place; perhaps because of his loose lips and white, flabby face, with its big jowls. Perhaps—but who can read the heart of a woman, particularly a woman whose defensive instincts have been sharpened by life on a homestead far from neighbors. Disliking to appear inhospitable, yet not desirous of asking the stranger into her home, Hattie felt immensely relieved when in the cabin the baby awoke and began to cry.

Excusing herself, she entered the cabin and, lifting the baby from its crib, sat down in the rocker Teddy had made her, and as she slowly rocked to and fro, she found herself wondering what had brought the man who called himself "Traynor" to Lake-where-the-wind-never-blows.

"Just passing through on my way to Sunset Mountain," Traynor explained to Grizzly Gallagher and Teddy, "hunting one of the 'lost mines' of the West."

"I've lived in the hills more'n forty years," said Grizzly Gallagher, "and it's news to me if there is a mine, lost or otherwise, on Sunset Mountain. I reck'n you'll hunt a long time before you find it."

"I'm going to find it," said Clem Traynor, "if I have to stay in the hills all summer."

"Such being the case," said Grizzly Gallagher, "you might drop around to my cabin once in a while; it's at the head of Cashaway Creek, about four or five miles from where you're going to do your prospecting."

"Well," said Traynor, "glad I met up with all you folks. Seems like I won't want for company while I'm in the hills. Guess I'll have to be moving along though; for I aim to reach Sunset Mountain to-night."

Watching Traynor and his horse plod slowly out of sight along the edge of the lake, Grizzly Gallagher thoughtfully passed his hand through his silver-tipped beard; then he lifted his otter-skin cap and scratched his head.

"I swan," he exclaimed, "I most sartinly do! Seems to me that somwhere, sometime, I've met up with that feller before, but durn my old hide if I can place him."

"I can," announced Teddy with deci-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sion. "I'm not likely to forget where I saw him. I was a school boy at the time, and one day just as school let out, Sheriff Mahoney came riding past with a man handcuffed to his stirrup. And the man was he who calls himself Clem Traynor."

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher again. "That's sure a thing a boy wouldn't be likely to forget. I remember him myself now. The name he went by then was 'Gentleman Casper.' He robbed the paymaster of the Golden Grubstake Mine of fifty thousand dollars. Arrested by Sheriff Mahoney, he was sentenced to serve ten years in the State Penitentiary at Boise City. But they never recovered the gold."

"I'll bet Traynor, or Casper, or whatever his name is," said Teddy, "has come back to get the gold he stole, and that is the lost mine he expects to find on Sunset Mountain."

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher. "I most sartinly do! Little did I think when I found those sunflowers that right then I was walking on buried gold."

"You think then," asked Teddy, "that he sowed the sunflower seed over the place where the gold was buried?"

"Sure he did," said Grizzly, "to mark the place. But it was surely luck that any of 'em remained after so long, for animals and birds have a powerful liking for the oily rich seeds of the sunflower."

Quietly Hattie joined them as they stood discussing the matter.

"Mother gave that man the sunflower seeds," she said. "I've often heard her tell the story of Gentleman Casper, and how sometimes he used to eat a meal at the restaurant she is running down at McCall."

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher. "I most sartinly do!"

"What shall we do?" asked Teddy. "Go and inform Sheriff Mahoney?"

"Better than that," said Grizzly Gallagher. "I know just where I found those sunflowers. I'll go thar and dig up the gold and return it to the owners of the Golden Grubstake Mine."

"Suppose Traynor beats you to it, Grizzly?" objected Hattie.

"He may beat me to it," agreed Grizzly Gallagher, "but not being a woodsman, he'll have a hard time locating himself now that the sunflowers are gone."

"He'll find the stems," said Teddy.

"After two years?" scoffed Grizzly Gallagher. "Thar ain't been a sunflower grow thar since I found that seed, for each year I've been back to see."

"If I were you," suggested Hattie, "I'd watch out for Traynor; for I believe he would kill you if he thought you had found the gold."

"I'll be watching," promised Grizzly, "and if I don't show up here once in a while, you'd better send the sheriff to look me up. So-long. Take care of the baby."

Hand in hand Teddy Blaine and his wife stood looking after the old trapper as he strode around the edge of the lake, finally to disappear from sight among the sheltering pines.

"It would be a terrible thing if anything should happen to him," said Hattie fearfully. "He's the best friend we've got."

"Aye," agreed Teddy. "The mountains will never seem the same to us again when Grizzly Gallagher dies."

On the summit of Sunset Mountain, facing the west, is a sheer wall of gray granite three hundred feet in height. For centuries untold the face of this cliff has been caving beneath the crushing grip of the fingers of the frost, and the trickling waters of the spring behind the fissured rock. So from the foot of the cliff extending nearly halfway down the west slope of the mountain, is a great sea of granite fragments piled in indescribable chaos.

For the most part the huge masses of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

granite have been shattered in their fall to pieces weighing forty or fifty pounds apiece; but here and there, bridging twelve or fourteen square yards of rubble, is a great slab, which, harder than the rest, has remained intact. Sticking out from beneath many of these fragments one can see piles of cut grass and weeds, the result of the labors of the pika, or little chief hare, a tailless animal, in size and appearance something like a gray guinea pig—if guinea pigs are ever gray—whose color blends so perfectly with his surroundings that were it not for his sharp whistle of alarm he would remain invisible.

At the foot of the talus, or rock slide, extending nearly to the base of the mountain, is an open "park," covered in the summer with tufts of bunch grass, upon which deer come to browse and beneath many of which blue grouse build their nests.

It was in this open glade that Grizzly Gallagher had found the sunflowers growing at widely spaced distances, the natural result of the few remaining seeds having been scattered by winds and birds.

Here he expected to find the gold buried by Traynor, alias Gentleman Casper, if it had not already been recovered by the man who had placed it there.

Two days had elapsed since Grizzly Gallagher had left the Blaine homestead, and during that time he had not seen any sign of Traynor; but in the dawn of the third morning the old trapper found his camp on the bank of a little creek that circled the base of Sunset Mountain. By this Grizzly Gallagher reasoned that, so far, Traynor's search for the gold had been fruitless.

"Guess I'll climb the east side of old Sunset," murmured Grizzly Gallagher into his silver-tipped beard, "and from the summit I'll see what is to be seen."

Two hours later he peered cautiously over the edge of the great cliff, beneath which lay the west side of the mountain. It had not yet been reached by the sun. From where he lay the old trapper could see the open place where, at the foot of the great slide, the sunflowers had grown; it was empty of life and undisturbed by the marks of shovel or pick.

"I swan," murmured the old trapper. "I most sartinly do! That varmint is surely taking his time about looking for his gold."

As Grizzly Gallagher ceased speaking, a sudden clatter below the cliff caused him to transfer his gaze to the great rock slide. Here and there a rock was moving, slowly, slowly; then more rocks moved and more and more; and heaved out by the pressure, a huge slab reared up, toppled over, and went crashing down on top of a section of the slide that was slowly moving down Sunset Mountain.

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher. "Something surely started that slide." As he peered more closely he saw a man standing on the talus above where the slide was still moving. For a moment Traynor stood there, leaning on an iron bar. Then he deliberately pried loose another fragment of granite and, with a preliminary grinding noise, another section of the talus slid slowly down the mountain to come to rest at last in a cloud of dust.

Slowly there drifted up to the nostrils of Grizzly Gallagher a sulphurous smell caused by the friction of the grinding rocks; then all was still for a moment, until the silence was broken by the whistle of a little chief hare.

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher. "I most sartinly do! I must have been mistaken about those sunflowers having anything to do with the hidden gold."

As he spoke, he arose to his feet and stood for a moment outlined against the rising sun. At that moment, three hundred feet below him, standing on the loose slide rock, Traynor raised his head.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An oath rattled through the still morning air, then Traynor's hand flashed down and came up holding a pistol. A forty-five slug whined its way upward, and the old trapper felt his otter-skin cap lifted from his head as though by a sudden gust of wind.

"I swan!" It was all Grizzly Gallagher could think of in the utter surprise of that moment. "I most sartinly do!"

But before he could return the shot there came a rumble that totally eclipsed the echoes of the report, and he was horrified to see Traynor stumble, as, jarred into motion by the detonation, the great slide began to move beneath his feet. Catlike, Traynor sprang to another boulder, but even as he landed, it turned over. Above him, beneath him, all around him, the slide was on the move. Slowly at first, then more quickly. Chasms opened here and there, boulders each as large as a house, upreared, stood poised for a split second; on one of them a man stood with arms flung skyward. Came a crashing roar, a cloud of sulphurous-smelling dust, a grinding rumble. Then silence again. The slide had stopped. Peeping out from beneath a boulder at its edge, a little chief hare punctuated the silence with his sharp whistle.

Stunned into silence by the awful thing he had seen, Grizzly Gallagher slowly made his way around the mountain until at last he reached the open park to the edge of which the great slide had hurled a few scattered boulders. For many minutes the old trapper stood there with his bearded face turned toward the cliff upon which a few minutes previously he had been standing. Then having assured himself that it would be impossible for the slide rock to move until the cliff should cave again, he slowly began to make his way upward over the chaos.

Traynor was gone; deep he lay beneath the slide he had started. Not even his pistol nor his iron crowbar did Grizzly Gallagher find. But, lying among the rocks, he found the scattered haymow of a little chief hare, and in among the débris a few silver gray husks caught gleams from the sunlight that was just peeping over the cliff.

Gathering a handful of the husks Grizzly Gallagher stood there and let them trickle through his gnarled fingers and, borne away on the morning breeze, they drifted among the rocks.

"That accounts for me not finding any more sunflowers down yonder," mused Grizzly Gallagher. "Them little varmints harvested and stored away the seeds for a winter grubstake. Now I wonder whether that thar slide uncovered Traynor's buried gold, for it's a cinch it must have been buried thar or he wouldn't have been digging among those rocks."

For an hour Grizzly Gallagher searched among the detritus of the great silde, but nothing rewarded him; Sunset Mountain was keeping her secret well.

"Well," mused Grizzly Gallagher at last, "guess the best thing I can do is to go in and break the news to Sheriff Mahoney and see what's to be done with Traynor's camp outfit."

As he made his way back to camp it occurred to him that it might be well to pack in Traynor's outfit himself. So, by the sound of its bell, he located and caught the dead man's horse and returned to the camp he had made.

While Grizzly Gallagher was getting the duffle together, idly he picked up a quite large fragment of whitish quartz which lay by the ashes of Traynor's dead camp fire. Suddenly he gave his favorite exclamation.

"I swan! I most sartinly do!"

For the piece of quartz was specked all over with gold, and on one side of it was pasted a paper label which read: Sunset Mine, 1862. Property of Idaho State Museum.

"By the Eternal!" It was an ejacula-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion Grizzly Gallagher only used in moments of most intense surprise. "Maybe after all thar is a 'lost mine' somewhere on Sunset Mountain! Dog-goned if I won't have to go and tell Teddy about this; and Hattie and the baby."

"So Gentleman Casper, alias Clem Traynor, got what was coming to him," observed Sheriff Mahoney when Grizzly Gallagher reached McCall with news of the great slide on Sunset Mountain. "Well, it served him right, and it saved me a heap of trouble; for I received a telephone call from Boise City warning me to look out for him as he was supposed to be headed this way. Seems like after he was released from the penitentiary he was given a job as assistant janitor at the State Museum and took the opportunity to rob that institution of some of its most valuable specimens."

"Funny I never heard of the Sunset Mine," said Grizzly Gallagher. "I who have spent more'n forty years in these hills."

"Never heard of it myself," said Sheriff Mahoney. "Guess the caving of the cliff covered up the old workings long before you or I were born; perhaps before the town of McCall was built."

"If the lost mine is as rich as the specimen Traynor stole and I found," observed Grizzly Gallagher, "it would be well worth seeking."

"Can't tell anything about it," said the old sheriff. "More'n likely the old mine was worked out before it was abandoned. Men don't abandon claims so long as they contain a stake."

"Just the same," said Grizzly Gallagher, "I believe I'll do a little prospecting around the big slide."

Grizzly Gallagher was seconded in his intention by Teddy, and it was he who made a trip to Boise City and interviewed the custodian of the State Museum relative to the piece of stolen quartz.

The custodian had only held his position a few years, having taken the place of one who had died. He knew nothing of the lost mine on Sunset Mountain. Nor did the records of the Museum throw much light on the matter; just gave the catalogue number of the specimen and the notation that it had been donated by "James Clagg to my partner Asa Malloy of Boise City in September, 1862." And that upon the death of Asa Malloy, in 1910, it had become the property of the State Museum.

All Teddy's inquiries failed to elicit any information about the lost mine from the few old men who gathered around the card tables of the Old Timer cigar store in Boise City, nor was he able to find out anything about James Clagg. He and his mine seemed to have vanished with the sixty-two years which had elapsed since he had given the specimen to his partner, Asa Malloy.

"Just the same," observed Grizzly Gallagher, "Traynor must have had some reason for prying among the rocks of the big slide. You know the first thing he mentioned was that he was 'hunting a lost mine.'"

"With the slide rock constantly shifting and moving," suggested Teddy, "isn't it possible that while hunting a place to hide his stolen gold, he accidentally ran across the entrance to the old mine, and that while he was in the penitentiary, the cliff caved again and covered it up?"

"Hard telling," said Grizzly Gallagher, removing his otter-skin cap as Hattie joined them outside the cabin at Lake-where-the-wind-never-blows. "How would it be if you and I were to pitch a tent down thar where I found the sunflowers and put in the summer prospecting the big slide for the lost mine of Sunset Mountain?"

"I could come home every week-end," said Teddy. "I guess Hattie could run the homestead while I'm away."

"I!" exclaimed his wife. "Run the homestead? You've gone gold crazy, Teddy. Do you think baby and I are

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

going to stay here all alone? No sirree, we'll all go and camp at Sunset Mountain this summer, and I'll take along those sunflower seeds Grizzly gave me and plant them all around the tent, so if we don't find the lost mine, we'll raise a crop of gold of our own; sunflower gold."

So Grizzly Gallagher and Teddy packed in tents and supplies and, among the bunch grass of the "park" where the old trapper had found the sunflowers growing, a little to one side of the big slide, so as to be out of danger from rolling rocks, two tents were pitched, side by side. Around each of the tents Hattie planted a double row of sunflower seeds, and Grizzly Gallagher built a little brush fence around them and covered them with wire netting that they might not be destroyed in their babyhood by the hosts of little chief hares who from the tops of gray granite boulders whistled amazement at the invasion of their mountain retreat.

Day followed day; above the tents Grizzly Gallagher and Teddy worked, turning over rocks, prying beneath them, searching every hold and cranny for the lost mine. But not by so much as a piece of quartz did they find any evidence that it had ever existed.

In June the sunflowers formed a ring of great green leaves a foot high around the tents; by the end of July they raised knobby round heads above the ridge poles—heads that hinted of golden blossoms soon to unfold. And the little chief hares from the top of gray granite slabs watched the sunflowers and thought of the harvest to come, and wondered and wondered when the giants who had planted them would quit their noise making and go away.

Each night after the day's work was done, Grizzly Gallagher, Teddy and his wife would sit around their camp fire listening to the murmur of the creek below the mountain, to the hooting of the horned owls on the face of the great cliff, and steal glances upward at the starlit sky that above them hung like a tambourine of purest blue, studded with silver bells. And the awe of the infinite would creep into their souls and they'd be very quiet.

"I guess we're licked," said Grizzly one night at the beginning of August. "We've been over every inch of the slide and found nothing. Of course we could be bullheaded and keep our search until snow flies, but in everything there's a time comes when one should quit; and it seems to me that that time has arrived."

"The sunflowers will be in full bloom in a few days," said Hattie. "I've been so looking forward to seeing them that I'd hate to be disappointed now."

"Yeh," seconded Teddy. "Let's stay until the sunflowers bloom."

Grizzly Gallagher looked thoughtfully up at the sky. "Feel anything?" he asked.

Seen through the firelight, Hattie thought for a moment that Grizzly Gallagher's bearded face bore a strange resemblance to that of a prophet of old.

"It's funny," she said, "but for some moments past I have been thinking that the pines were singing a slow sad song."

"They're praying," said Grizzly Gallagher, "praying for rain."

It came again. Like the voices of a million whispering children the three-needled groups of pine needles responded to the caress of a tiny breeze—a breeze from the southwest.

"Inside of three days we ought to be out of here," said Grizzly Gallagher, "for it's going to rain—rain hard. And when it rains the cliff is likely to cave, and the slide will move again."

"But my sunflowers?" objected Hattie. "All summer I've been waiting for them to bloom."

Slowly Grizzly Gallagher arose to his feet and strode over to the great, heavy-headed stalks with their leaves like elephant's ears. Reaching up, the old

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

woodsman bent over one of the great closed flowers, out of the center of which the gold was just beginning to creep. Patiently he examined the closed petals. Then he released the plant, and it sprang back as though glad to be free.

"It'll be three days before they're in full bloom," he said, "and we ought to go before the rain."

"Teddy?" Across the fire Hattie looked imploringly at her husband. "Baby never has seen a sunflower. Let's stay."

"Suits me, girl," said Teddy. "Guess we'll live through the storm. Not as a sunflower in bloom will mean much to baby, for he's only nine months old."

"Teddy Blaine!" exclaimed Hattie. "I think you're just the meanest thing." And huffily she arose and retired to her tent, whence came the sounds of a baby crowing in glee.

"If it should be a thunderstorm such as often occurs at this time of the year," said Grizzly Gallagher, "it will smash the sunflowers flat."

Teddy started to speak, then stopped and raised his hand for silence. From the face of the great cliff of Sunset Mountain a great slab slid off and crashed on the jumble of rocks below.

Followed two days of sultry weather with a thunderstorm brewing in the southwest. On the morning of the third day several of the sunflowers burst into full bloom, and from beneath the fringe of their golden lashes turned dark-brown eyes upon the face of the sun.

"We'd ought to pack up and get out," insisted Grizzly Gallagher. "That thar sun is too bright; long afore night something's going to bust."

As though to confirm the prophecy of the weatherwise old woodsman, a little after two in the afternoon a heavy bank of lead-colored cloud drifted across the face of the sun and there sprang up a chill breeze which caused the sunflowers to partly close their petals and sadly nod their golden heads.

"Better slack the guy ropes of the tents," advised Grizzly Gallagher, "for it's going to rain."

"It's going to rain," sang the tall pines, and the dark foliaged firs like cowled monks chanted a sonorous refrain.

Soon a bank of black cloud swung around from the southwest and completely enfolded the summit of Sunset Mountain; low peals of thunder sounded from afar, and Hattie hurried into the tent as the baby began to cry.

Pattering on the white canvas of the tents, great raindrops left big gray splotches, and beneath the rising fury of the wind the tall sunflowers thrashed to and fro, to and fro. Suddenly the roots of one gave way before the onslaught of the wind, and slowly it fell until it lay half supine with its great golden head leaning over the ridgepole of the tent.

A living streak of steel-colored flame etched its zigzag way across the cloud above Sunset Mountain; followed a peal of thunder so great that the very ground beneath the tents seemed to shake. More vivid became the forked lightning; more thunderous and terrifying the diapason of sound that rolled back from the bastioned hills. Then, like a million gray lances hurled by the angry gods, down came the rain.

In three minutes a cascade of water was pouring over the face of the great cliff on to the slide below, and slowly it began to move. Not part of it, but the whole thing! Four hundred feet in width at the base and more than three hundred feet in length, slowly it came toward the tents with a snarling, angry roar.

Seizing a couple of quilts, Grizzly Gallagher rushed into Hattie's tent and, snatching the baby from her arms, enfolded it in the quilts.

"Get out," he yelled above the fury of the storm. "A cloud has busted on the summit."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Drenched to the very bone, and shivering in the chill wind, the three of them reached the shelter of the timber a hundred yards from the path of the great slide, and tight to his great breast Grizzly Gallagher hugged the baby, wrapped in its shielding quilts.

"We're all right now," said the old woodsman. "Watch the cliff; she's going to cave."

As he spoke, little particles of rock began to drop from the three-hundred-foot face of rock above them. Then, as though split off by a giant ax, a huge section of the mountain face slid down onto the top of the moving slide.

"My sunflowers!" exclaimed Hattie, with the inconsistency of a woman. "There's only one left."

For, stronger than the rest, one lone sunflower still remained erect, facing the oncoming slide.

"The slide is going to miss the tents after all," said Grizzly Gallagher. "Good thing I insisted on pitching them where I did. And the storm is about over. See, the rain is ceasing, and the clouds are drifting away toward the northeast."

As he spoke, the sun came out from behind the clouds and shone brightly on the huge fresh scar that defaced the side of Sunset Mountain. And as the pressure of the water behind it ceased, the big rock slide suddenly stopped moving.

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher. "I most sartinly do! That's the worst cloud-burst I ever saw in more'n forty years in the hills."

"Look!" said Hattie suddenly, pointing to where the shadow of the lone sunflower lay like a path across the scattered rocks. "There's a hole in the side of the mountain."

"I swan!" said Grizzly Gallagher. "I most sartinly do!"

"It's the lost mine," said Teddy.

Shoved ahead by the power of the water falling over the cliff, the great slide had moved on until it had disclosed the mouth of a tunnel which had been hidden for more than sixty years.

"Hold the baby, Hattie," said Grizzly Gallagher, "and wait here while Teddy and I go and take a look."

With the baby in her arms, Hattie slowly clambered after Grizzly Gallagher and Teddy as they made their way over the slide to the mouth of the lost mine. But once there Grizzly Gallagher absolutely forbade her to enter.

"And it's your place to stay with her," he said to Teddy, "for there might be danger of caving ground."

Fifteen, twenty, thirty feet Grizzly Gallagher made his way beneath a roof of rotten rock, then suddenly he stopped and knelt. For, seen by the thin gray light that filtered in from the tunnel mouth, was a pile of broken quartz richly veined with gold.

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gallagher as he picked up a piece. "I most sartinly do! It must have been lying here since the cliff caved on the mouth of the tunnel more'n sixty years ago."

"I reckon it's purty rich," he told Teddy and Hattie when he returned to where the sun was shining as though there never had been a storm. "But we'll find out for sure after things dry out a little more."

Then gently Grizzly Gallagher opened the baby's tiny fingers and closed them over the piece of glittering quartz.

"How's that for a nugget, old timer?" he asked.

But the baby cared nothing about gold. He was much more interested in the shadow of the big sunflower that, like the finger of fate, still pointed out the lost mine, and, beneath the touch of the breeze moved to and fro, to and fro.

Slowly the baby's fingers unclasped, and the golden quartz fell clattering to the rocks and rolled into a deep hole. Wide the blue baby eyes stared at the weaving shadow of the sunflower; then the corners of his lips crinkled in a smile.

"Goo," said the baby, "goo."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the Sheriff's Clothes

By

Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Printed with Wool," "Prisoners of the Outside," etc.

THE wind, murmuring among the pines, brought the smell of smoke to Steve Kilgore. His drooping head came up with a jerk. Almost instantly hope revived. He peered this way and that through the gloom of the forest, and his eager eyes received their reward.

A light gleamed against the black curtain of the night. Fortunately the woods were thin in that direction, else he might have missed the beacon. It was not in the way he had been proceeding, and, but for the whiff of smoke and sparse growth of trees, he soon would have been out of range. So gloomy was his spirit, and so weary his body, that he had ceased to look intently about, as he went along. But there was the light—an oblong panel, which at that distance appeared scarcely larger than a playing card.

A light and the smell of smoke—a human habitation. Shelter, warmth, food, rest. The man stumbled ahead, with a glow of gratitude in his heart.

Forty-eight hours previously Steve Kilgore might have dodged a human habitation, but cold and hunger and the terror of being lost in the forest had done their work. Even a wild animal, starving, loses its inherent fear of man. Steve Kilgore was not much better off. For years he had been hunted as a wild animal. Every man's hand was against him now, even the hands of those who had been his friends.

The fugitive went straight to the habitation in which burned the light. Caution had departed. He cared neither for man nor beast in his hunt for food. He felt of the pistols in the holsters at his sides, but he hoped he wouldn't have to use them.

From what he could see in the gloom, Steve Kilgore was certain that he approached the cabin of a trapper. He knew that he was in the Nippicutt Woods, a favorite trapping grounds, and that it was the season when trappers should be coming in. Snow would soon begin to fly; indeed, the air held a hint of snow at that very moment. Steve had never before visited this end of the Nippicutt Woods, but he had been in other parts of the vast forest, and he knew enough about the region to inspire him with confidence.

Trappers usually ran the season alone, or in pairs. Seldom did three men work a set of lines from one cabin. The fugitive would be called on to face, under ordinary circumstances, not more

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than two men, and perhaps only one. The autumn was far enough advanced to make it more than probable that the man or men in the cabin had come into the forest two or three weeks previously. They would do that, in all likelihood, in order to get their lines tracked and to survey the probable fur runs before the freeze and snow set in. If the occupants of that cabin had been away from the towns across the forest as long as ten days, they would know nothing about the latest escapade attributed to Steve Kilgore, unless an officer, in his hunt for Steve, had come that way and spread the news. This was a chance that Steve must take, if he were not to pass up this long-sought opportunity for food and shelter.

Starlight lay over the little clearing around the cabin—the clearing from which the logs had been taken for the dwelling, and dead trees cut down for fuel. The practiced eye of Steve Kilgore observed that nothing much had been done toward clearing, and this strengthened his belief that a trapper dwelt here. The light from the window illuminated the path of the wanderer, as he marched straight to the door of the cabin.

A dog growled inside. Steve paused, but only for a moment. This first sound sent one of the fugitive's hands to a pistol butt, but the hand quickly lifted. He remembered his resolution about gun play. The next step brought a stiffer growl and a series of barks from the dog, but no sound nor sight of a human.

The fugitive hammered on the door with his fist. Standing on the threshold, he could see nothing but a thin slice of the cabin wall and ceiling through the near-by window, but this revealed nothing.

Now the dog came to the door. He had ceased to bark, but Steve could hear him whining and sniffing at the crack below, as though he would ascertain what manner of man stood outside. Steve hammered again. A voice rewarded him this time.

"Who's there?"

It was a man's voice, but somehow it sounded weak and helpless. The tone seemed to hold a hint of weariness.

Steve cried: "I'm lost 'n the woods—cold an' hungry."

There was a moment's silence.

"Come in," the man inside said. "Door's unlocked."

"How 'bout the dog?" Steve asked.

"Here 'Spades'—here Spades!" the man called to the dog and then to his visitor: "All right—come on in! Dog's all right."

The fugitive lifted the latch and stepped inside. The eyes of the two men met, and instinctively each felt that he faced an enemy. There was only one room in the cabin, and only one man besides Steve Kilgore in the room. The first glance told Steve that he had nothing to be afraid of. The man was ill, lying on a bunk against the far wall. A Winchester rifle stood against the wall near his hand, and a pair of pistols lay on a chair drawn up to the head of the bunk; but Steve Kilgore knew that he could cover the man with his own pistols before the other could reach his, if it came to that.

Steve closed the door. There was a fire burning in an iron stove that evidently served both for cooking and heating. Steve at once appraised the place as the home of a trapper, yet the man on the bunk did not look like a trapper. The fugitive's thoughts ran swiftly.

The real occupant of this place was not in the room. This inspired momentary fear, for some one else might come in at any moment. Yet, in the instant of silence that intervened between Steve's entrance and his first words, the fugitive realized that he must show neither fear nor distrust.

"Sick?" Steve asked.

"Yes—little bit," the man replied, in a voice which he evidently sought to in-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

fuse with a false strength. "Took a headache and thought I'd rest up a bit."

Their gazes hadn't separated for an instant. Steve studied the unhealthily bright eyes and flushed cheeks of the man on the bed. He observed the white hands lying on the blanket. He also noticed that the man's whiskers had grown into a short stubble of perhaps three or four days in length. An ordinarily smooth-shaven man who had been ill about that space of time, Steve decided.

"Looks like more than a headache to me," Steve commented. He grinned with an effort at sociability.

The sick man made no rejoinder at once. His mind and perceptions had been busy, too. He saw a roughly clad man, stained and soiled by several days' wandering in the forest—a man who had evidently suffered severely from cold and hunger. He also saw a strong man, tall, with broad shoulders and heavy hands, and, despite his efforts to hide it, a gleam of desperation in his eyes. There was certainly nothing reassuring about the countenance of Steve Kilgore, for his beard had grown at least ten days, and its bristling blackness appeared unusually forbidding on a face which had been scratched by thorns and briers.

"Think it's more than a headache, eh?" the sick man rejoined. "Well, maybe it is. You don't look none too well yourself."

"I'm hungry," Steve said.

"You look it. Your eyes are sort of wild. There's grub on the shelf over there. Help yourself."

Steve glanced toward the shelf behind the stove, but his glance did not stray away from the other man long enough for him to reach his weapons, had he been so minded. Steve had observed that the shelf was well laden with food of various descriptions, and he had no doubt that there was more about the place. There was usually plenty of food in a trapper's cabin at this time of year, for it was the season when they stocked up. The two men studied each other intently again.

"Stranger," Steve said, "I don't like to be unsociable, but a man in my fix has got to be careful. Ye've ast me to have some of yer grub, an' I thank ye; but I'd like t' ast another favor of ye?"

"What's that?"

"Lemme take yer guns an' move 'em out o' reach o' yer hand."

A wan smile crossed the face of the sick man.

"It's nice of you to ask," he said, with a trace of sarcasm, "when all you had to do was take 'em. I'm down sick—pretty sick—you can see that; and you got your guns on your hips. You could get the drop on me before I could stick my hand out. It's nice of you to ask. Well, go ahead and take 'em. I can't stop you."

Steve meditated. He observed the rising color in the man's cheeks.

"Maybe I hadn't oughta git ye excited," he said. "Ye don't look none too good. I'll promise ye, stranger, that I don't want nuthin' but food and maybe a night's sleep in this warm room. Ye'll come to no harm from me, but—— Well, I got to be careful. I don' know who ye be."

The sick man rejoined: "Don't know's it makes any difference who I am. I can't hurt you."

"Ye ain't so sick ye can't shoot," Steve told him gravely, "an' it'd take just one shot t' fetch me down."

"What do I want to shoot you for?"

"Well—well, I dunno."

"Do people usually take a shot at you on sight?"

"I've knowed 'em to."

Again the wan smile crossed the face of the man on the bed.

"You're frank about it, anyway," he said. "Who are you?"

"I ain't sayin' who I be," the fugitive answered. "I got t' be careful."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, take the guns," the other man rejoined. "Take 'em, if it'll ease your mind any—and eat something. You make me nervous, with your hungry eyes. Take the guns and eat."

Yet Steve Kilgore made no movement toward the weapons.

"I don't like to take 'em," he said presently.

"Why not?" the sick man asked, surprised.

"It looks like I don't trust ye."

"Well, you don't, do you?"

Steve shifted his feet uneasily. He studied the man solemnly.

"If I knowed there wa'n't nobody else around here," he said, "I'd let them guns be."

"There's nobody else around here."

"Nobody comin' to-night—or maybe in the mornin'."

"Nobody, for forty-eight hours, anyway."

Steve Kilgore stood there meditating a moment or so longer. Then, with a jerk of his strong body, he turned and strode to the shelf whereon lay the food he craved. He was soon eating ravenously.

The dog sniffed around Steve's feet while he ate. The men occasionally glanced at each other, but there was no longer a sense of distrust between them. Yet each felt the other to be an enemy.

Steve, stuffed with food, drew back from the table. The dog had been lying at his feet. The scraping of the chair on the floor startled the animal, but, once Steve was settled in his new position, the dog lay down again. The fugitive patted his head, and the animal lay there. It was apparent that even the suspicions of the dog had been allayed. Steve glanced around, spied the water bucket, and helped himself to a generous drink. Then he sat down, facing the man on the bed.

The sick man's coat was hanging over the back of the chair at his bedside. With an effort he reached into the inside pocket of the coat and produced a cigar. He tossed it to Steve.

"Might's well smoke," he said. "I can't."

"Too sick to smoke, eh?"

"Yes. It wouldn't be good for my lungs."

"Yer lungs? What ails 'em?"

"Pneumonia, I guess. That's what it feels like, and that's what Ike Cross thinks it is."

"Who's Ike Cross?" Steve inquired with sudden interest.

"Fellow that lives here. He's a trapper. He's gone to Pleasantville after a doctor."

"Pleasantville, eh? When'd he start?"

"This morning—walking. He'll ride back with the doctor. As I told you, I don't expect any one here for forty-eight hours or more."

Steve meditated, sucking at the cigar and blowing clouds of smoke into the room. He was enjoying the cigar. It helped him to think.

"It'll take 'em about that long t' git back," he agreed.

Not for a moment did he doubt the words of the man on the bunk. There was something about the situation which made it impossible for Steve to lie and also impossible for him to attribute a lie to the other.

"Stranger," Steve said, "I know sumpin about pneumony. I had it one time, an' I rec'lect what the doctor said."

"What'd he say?"

"He talked most about fresh air. He kep' me bundled up in bed, but he gimme plenty o' fresh air. Ye ain't got enough fresh air here."

"Maybe you're right."

"I know I be. I'll open that window."

Steve proceeded to to this. He also put fresh wood into the stove. There was plenty of wood in the room. Undoubtedly Ike Cross had piled it there. The sick man had been compelled to get out of bed occasionally to replenish the fire. Steve noticed that a water bucket

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sat beside the bed. Ike Cross, the trapper, had left plenty of water inside the cabin, but none but an exceptionally strong man could have gone through the ordeal of attending to the fire and waiting on himself while suffering from pneumonia.

"Guess you're right about the fresh air," the sick man agreed, drawing into his lungs the cool breeze that came through the window. "I thought of that, too. But I thought mostly about not eating anything. I heard they don't feed pneumonia patients, but give 'em plenty of water. Ike left three buckets of water, one alongside the bed here. I think I'm getting better. I don't seem to have the fever I did this morning."

"Maybe ye passed the crisis," Steve suggested.

"Maybe. I hope so."

"Ye hadn't better talk no more," Steve urged. "Be quiet an' try t' sleep. I see there's a coupla blankets in the corner there. I'll turn in, if ye don't mind."

"Go ahead. That's where Ike Cross slept, after I came here sick."

"Call me, if ye need anything—an' keep bundled up in yer blankets. We'll leave that window open. It'll do ye good, an' I'll tend the fire. Ye go to sleep."

"Thanks."

Thus they spent the night. In the morning the sick man was much improved. He had slept well in a room filled with fresh air. He had scarcely any fever, but he was very weak. Steve filled the water buckets with fresh water from a spring outside, and he did what he could to make the patient comfortable. Steve ate a hearty breakfast and accepted another cigar offered by the stranger. He cleaned his dishes and made the cabin tidy. He fed the dog.

"Stranger," Steve said, "I got to be movin'."

"All right. Thanks for what you've done for me."

"That's all right. It was a good thing fer both of us, maybe. I needed grub an' a place t' sleep, an' ye needed a little tendin' to." Steve paused and then asked: "Ye're an officer, ain't ye, stranger?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. I seen yer star last night, when ye reached in yer coat pocket fer that cigar, but I didn't say nuthin'. What're ye doin' in the Nippicutt Woods, stranger?"

"Hunting for Steve Kilgore."

The men continued to gaze at one another, and their faces were emotionless, blank of any expression that would give a hint of what was going on inside.

"D'ye know who I be, stranger?" Steve asked.

"You're Steve Kilgore," the sheriff replied calmly.

Steve shifted uneasily. He studied the sheriff's clothing, scattered about the room, and then his eyes went back to the man's face.

"Ye're right about that," Steve admitted. "I'm Steve Kilgore. I been hunted so long an' chased around, that I don't deny it no more. I don't try an' cover it up, as ev'rybody's seen me or heard about me, and most folks know me on sight. Them that ain't seen me know what I look like, same's ye did."

"I knew you the minute you stepped in the door."

"Sure ye did, an' I knowed it. Well, why didn't ye take a shot at me when I was sleepin' there in the corner?"

"I didn't want to."

"Still ye're huntin' me, an' there's a reward."

"I'll get you some other way, when I get on my feet."

Steve nodded. He looked outside. The snow had set in.

"Keep that window open," he said, "even if it does snow in. Fresh air'll do ye good."

"Thanks."

Steve studied him again and said:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I thought I knowed ev'ry officer in this country. Ye must be a new one. I never seen ye, an' I don't think ye ever seen me afore I come in last night. What's yer name, stranger?"

"Fillmore. I'm the new sheriff of Badger County."

"I heard about ye," Steve rejoined, with a nod. "Ye're the feller that told all around ye c'd git me, eh?"

"I didn't tell it all around," Sheriff Fillmore protested. "I merely said I thought you'd been running loose long enough, and that I'd drag you in sooner or later."

"I seen that in a paper, all wrote up with a big headline on it."

"Yes, they printed an interview with me, when I took office."

There was a pause.

"Well," Steve said, "I wish ye luck."

"Thanks. But you'd better be moving, Steve, if you're going to get a good start. Ike Cross and the doctor will get back here to-morrow evening, and I'll tell them you're in this part of the woods. The doctor will spread the news through the trapping camps. I'll have to help run you down, you know. I'll have to give what information I can, even if I'm not able to join in the chase. I expect I'll have to go home and rest up, when I'm able to leave here. You'd better be moving, if you're going to make distance on foot."

"I'll make distance all right," Steve assured the sheriff. "I got a few hours to spare yet." The light of an idea kindled in his eyes. "I'll do it!" he exclaimed, with an air of detachment and determination, as though this new idea had made him momentarily unaware of the other man's presence. "Yes, sir, I'll do it."

"Do what?" Sheriff Fillmore demanded.

"I'll show ye."

About an hour later Steve Kilgore left the trapper's cabin and set off through the woods. He was much changed in appearance. He had shaved with the pocket razor he found in the shoulder pack of the sheriff. He was dressed from head to foot in the clothing of the sheriff, warm clothing and finely tailored, though altogether suited to the region. He had on the sheriff's high-laced boots and his wide-brimmed hat, with a braided leather band. He had on his back the sheriff's shoulder pack, and the pack was filled with food and the things a man takes with him for a tramp of several days in the forest. Steve Kilgore was arrayed much as the sheriff had been a few days previously when he set out to hunt for Steve Kilgore. The sheriff had come on foot, too, for he knew the disadvantages of traveling on a horse in the sort of hunt he intended to conduct—a quiet hunt. A man on foot can go places where he can't guide a horse, and he can approach much more quietly. Steve Kilgore, not a bad-looking fellow, now that he was shaved and dressed in decent clothing, also had the star of Sheriff Fillmore, and he carried this in his pocket, for he thought he might find it to his advantage to flash it occasionally. Steve Kilgore also had the money previously possessed by the sheriff, something like a hundred dollars.

Back in the cabin, Sheriff Fillmore lay on the bunk, ill and very weak, but feeling that he was on the mend. He thought of Steve Kilgore, and the manner in which he had taken his clothing and his badge of office, and then he said to himself:

"Well, he was decent about it, anyway."

Two days later Steve Kilgore walked into the city of Blenner, forty miles away from the cabin of Ike Cross. The fugitive, who had taken the sheriff's outfit on the impulse of the moment and without a definite idea as to his future movements, except that he intended to make good his escape from the Pleasantville district, now had a definite pur-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pose. He was dressed as he hadn't been dressed in years, and he no longer appeared as the rough and slovenly outlaw who had earned such a tough reputation. He could "get by" anywhere now, for his appearance was not against him, although he realized that he must move quickly. The doctor had arrived at Ike Cross' cabin by this time; undoubtedly he was already on his way back to Pleasantville with the news that Steve Kilgore, outlaw, was masquerading somewhere in the clothing of Sheriff Fillmore. The telegraph wires would soon be singing, and the police of Blenner on the lookout.

Steve Kilgore intended to move that very night. He knew of a gambling house in Blenner which he intended to hold up. He had been in the place, and he felt confident of his ability, with a brace of pistols, to "stick up the joint," single-handed. That escapade would give him money enough for certain and permanent escape—far away.

Steve went directly to a moderate-priced hotel and engaged a room, for he wished to sleep the remainder of the day. He bought four or five newspapers, published in Blenner and other cities in the region, for he also wished to see if they were yet printing stories about Steve Kilgore. He went to his room.

In the newspapers he found no mention of himself, except an indirect reference contained in an item about the illness of Sheriff Fillmore, of Badger County, in a trapper's cabin in the Nippicutt Woods. Ike Cross had taken the news into Pleasantville, and the item merely stated that the sheriff had been taken ill on a trip he made into the woods in search of Steve Kilgore, the outlaw. Pleasantville of course would know nothing about the meeting between the sheriff and the outlaw until the doctor returned with the news. The doctor probably would reach Pleasantville the next morning, but by that time Steve Kilgore would have held up the gambling house in Blenner and be safely on his way. Blenner was on one side of the Nippicutt Woods, and Pleasantville on the other, and the distance between the two places was about eighty-five miles.

Yet Steve Kilgore found plenty of interesting reading matter in those newspapers. The telegraph wire had carried out of Pleasantville a startling story. The Pleasantville State Bank had been held up the day previously, and the cashier shot and killed. The robbery had been perpetrated by a band of automobile bandits. They had, in their dash out of Pleasantville, also run down and killed an old man. They had driven straight into him with their automobile, and, according to the newspapers, there was no excuse for this, since the robbers could have turned the car to one side and passed the old man safely. But they hadn't chosen to do this. They hadn't turned the car an inch off its course, and the incident was merely another illustration of the reckless disregard for human life displayed in all parts of the country by modern bandits. Two murders were chalked up against that crew of auto bandits, and they were still at large.

Steve Kilgore muttered a string of curses on their heads, thanked his stars that they couldn't lay that crime to him, and turned over and went to sleep.

He awakened about nightfall. He shaved, for it was part of his game to look prosperous, if he were to gain entrance to the gambling house. The clothing he had appropriated from Sheriff Fillmore made it possible for him to achieve his purpose. He slicked this clothing up, removing the marks of his travels from the trapper's cabin, and, when he stepped into the street, he looked like any one of a hundred other men, hunters, timber cruisers, prospectors, who walked the streets of Blenner. He certainly did not resemble the gen-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eral idea held by the public of Steve Kilgore, the Badger County outlaw.

Steve realized that the latest sensation in Pleasantville would serve to lessen public interest in his own affairs. He had not committed murder in the holdup he had attempted to stage in Pleasantville. He hadn't even secured the money from the poolroom and "moonshine joint" which had been his latest objective. He had been driven away, and he had escaped after considerable gunfire, but no bloodshed. The bank holdup would cause Pleasantville almost to forget Steve Kilgore for a while, and undoubtedly the police of Blenner and the surrounding cities were concentrating on the capture of the automobile bandits. The thought strengthened Steve Kilgore in his purpose, and, for the first time since he fled from Pleasantville, Steve began to feel that he would ultimately achieve escape and liberty in some distant region.

He had something to eat. He had, of course, left the shoulder pack in the hotel room. He sauntered toward the gambling house.

Gambling in that Western State had long since been declared illegal, but gambling houses flourished. Steve Kilgore, looking like a man who had money, got inside the establishment of his choice easily enough. He sized things up and laid his plan of attack.

He thought it best to wait two or three hours. Then he would flash his guns and command the gamblers in what was called the "bench room" to step into another room, the "poker room." The roulette wheels, craps and blackjack tables were in the bench room, and the players did not sit down at these games. The craps table was an ordinary pool table, and the others were higher than card tables. Players stood up to them. Steve would herd the players and the dealers into the poker room and compel them to shut the door after them. He would then scoop off the tables whatever money was on them, and make his dash for liberty. There would be a considerable sum of money on the tables, for the dealers kept stacks of it on display. Steve had previously sized up this place, and he had always thought of it as one favorable for such a design.

Steve Kilgore had had long experience in sticking up gambling houses and similar establishments. He wandered over to a blackjack table, and there he played with varying fortune for a half hour or so. The table was a semicircular affair, behind which the dealer sat on a stool. The players stood around the outer rim of the table. Steve Kilgore, playing his hands of "twenty-one or bust," stood at one end of the table.

At the other end and facing Steve, stood a stockily built young man, with a swarthy countenance and sharp, shifting eyes that Steve did not like. Steve watched the man closely, and in time the fellow became aware of this scrutiny. Then things began to happen.

The conduct of the swarthy-faced individual became so extraordinary that Steve was at first surprised, then thrilled and elated.

All thought of holding up the gambling house slipped into the background of Steve Kilgore's consciousness, and his flesh tingled, as another purpose seized him. Unconsciously his mind had been preparing for something like this ever since he donned the clothing of Sheriff Fillmore in the Nippicutt Woods. Steve Kilgore, shaved and dressed like a white man, as he expressed it to himself, for the first time in years, had felt the first stirrings of some unaccountable emotion. This vague restlessness had never left him, and it came to its climax, as he faced the swarthy-faced man across the blackjack table.

Undoubtedly the fellow was scared. He would have broken into flight had they been in the open, but he was wise enough to know that flight would avail

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him nothing here. If the tall, strong man across the table, the man wearing a wide-brimmed hat with a braided leather band—if that man suspected his identity, he would be onto him at the first hint of intended departure.

The game of the man with the shifty eyes was to continue his play and watch for a chance to slip out of the place. But Steve Kilgore, who handled his cards with one hand, while the fingers of the other toyed with the star of Sheriff Fillmore in his side coat pocket, had no intention of permitting the fellow to slip away. He studied him closely now. Yes, he certainly answered the description of the automobile bandit who had shot that bank cashier to death in Pleasantville. Three or four people in the bank had seen the fatal shot fired. They had seen the slayer's face to good advantage, and they would never forget it. All had told their stories and furnished a description of the slayer. Steve Kilgore thought he had the man in front of him now, and the man's actions, his fright and his furtive lookout for a means of escape, seemed to confirm Steve Kilgore's judgment.

Steve's fingers closed on the sheriff's star. Then he released it and drew forth his hand. At the end of the next deal he picked up his money and started around the table.

The swarthy-faced man drew a pistol, and Steve Kilgore sprang upon him. A shot rang out.

Uproar filled the gambling house. Several men fled. The shot had been fired at close quarters, and Steve Kilgore knew that he was wounded. He could feel his strength oozing away, but he fought on. The stockily built man was a fighter and strong. They rolled over and over in the minute or so that elapsed before the onlookers took a hand.

Another bullet found its mark in the body of Steve Kilgore. Some one seized his antagonist. Steve's senses fled, just as the police came. He had time only to whisper:

"He's one of the Pleasantville bandits—who killed that cashier."

The police, after securing the bandit slayer, searched the clothing worn by Steve Kilgore.

"He's a sheriff," one of the policemen said, producing the star.

About a month later Sheriff Fillmore sat at the bedside of Steve Kilgore, in a Blenner hospital.

"Steve," the sheriff said, "the doctor says you're going to get well—that you'll be on your feet in two weeks."

Steve made no rejoinder.

"That fellow's confessed," Sheriff Fillmore went on, "and we've got two of his pals. We'll get the other one in time. Good work you did, Steve, and every one in Pleasantville is grateful—even the prosecutor."

"The prosecutor?"

"Yes. Nothing against you in Badger County now, Steve, and everything has been wiped off the books in the other counties around here, too. The prosecutors all went up and asked that the indictments be dismissed. It's all legal."

"I'm glad of that," Steve Kilgore said. "I was wonderin' if I wanted to git well."

"You see, Steve—you never killed a man, and it wasn't so hard. You shot up a lot of places—mostly gambling houses and saloons—and—— Well, Steve, you stirred up a lot of trouble. I have an idea that there were things laid to you that you didn't have a hand in. I felt that way when I took office, and I looked into it after you and I met in Ike Cross' cabin. You've been a bad actor, Steve, but you can be a useful citizen now, if you want to."

"I'm tired o' raisin' rumpuses," Steve rejoined simply.

"Glad to hear that. I've talked it over with the prosecutor, Steve, and we decided that you didn't disgrace my star

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

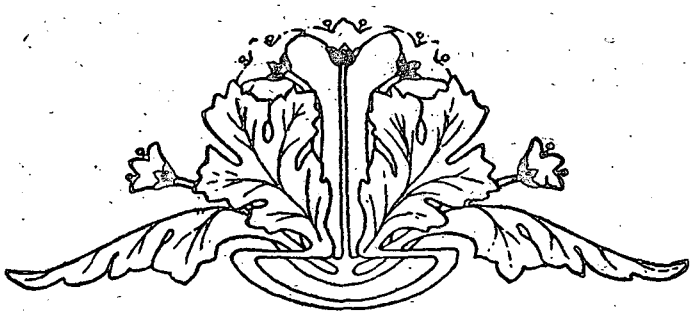
while you carried it. It was fine, the thing you did—so I've got a star for you, if you want it."

"A star?"

"Yes, a deputy's star. You'll be a good man on the job, Steve. We need a fighting man like you. Holdups and robberies getting thick now, Steve, all over the country. You can do good service."

Steve took the star and, after the sheriff had departed, studied it proudly. A phrase ran through his mind, and, alone, he spoke it aloud, for it fell pleasantly on his ear:

"Steve Kilgore, deputy sheriff."



THE MAIL TRAIL OF THE NORTH

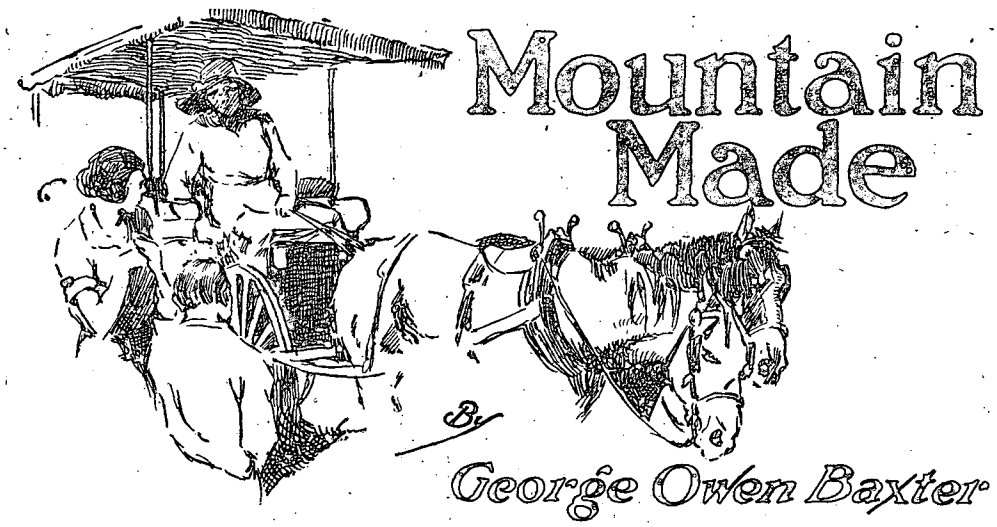
THE conventional notion of a rural mail carrier is a picture of a mail man who has nothing to do but step into his cart or flivver for a few hours and drop his letters and papers in the boxes along the highway. In many parts of the country, in Alaska and the Northwest, for instance, the mail man takes his life into his own hands almost every time he starts out on his route.

These men are not paid regular salaries, but take the job on contract. Of these men, who put in a competitive bid to risk their lives in the delivery of Uncle Sam's mail, fifty-five in the last two and one half years have lost their lives. Every year the mail route in Alaska produces its heroes. Recently the airplane has been welcomed as a safer and quicker way to cover the route than a dog sled or a man on snowshoes. The best a carrier could do over one Alaskan mail route was eighteen days. Now a plane does it in three hours. Because of the winding trail through the mountains the dogs had to travel three hundred and seventy-one miles, while the airplane cuts the distance to two hundred and eighty-one miles.

Not all the hazardous mail routes are in the Northwest. In southwestern Idaho is one of the most perilous routes. It is the trail between Rocky Bar and Atlanta, where in winter the carrier laden with fifty pounds of mail, makes his way on snowshoes. The snow slides are the real danger here. The last carrier who lost his life here was swept down a mountainside in January, and his body was not recovered until June.

Another dangerous route is one from Ellison Bay, the northwest post office on the Door County Peninsula in Wisconsin, where the State juts out into Lake Michigan, to Detroit Harbor, which is situated on Washington Island. This is an all-water mail route, and the danger here is from drifting ice fields. In extremely cold weather an ice bridge forms here, and sometimes in a break-up of the ice the mail carrier is caught out on the ice with his horse, sleigh, and mail. A few years ago a carrier was caught in a break-up and found himself on an ice cake barely large enough to hold him and his outfit. Fortunately, the United States coast guard on the near-by Plum Island, noticed his plight and rescued him, by towing over the cake to solid ice.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Author of "Larramee's Ranch," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

STRAIGHT TALK.

HEN she reached the house, she went straight to Kate Preston. For nothing happened in her life that Kate Preston did not hear first of all. She had been the lifelong confidante of Louise Carney. So she stormed in now to Kate.

"It is all over," she exclaimed.

"With Jack Rutledge?" asked the blind girl.

"How did you guess that?"

"I knew that trouble was coming."

"From what?"

"From Glenn."

"Kate!" cried the other, bewildered again by the strange fore-knowledge of the blind girl.

"Is it true, then?"

"That I have broken with Jack? Yes."

"But Glenn?"

"What do you mean?"

"Was it on account of him?"

"On account of Jack's strange attitude toward him. It was maddening. He tried to treat me like a little child. And he spoke of Glenn as if he were a devil, not a man! I was shamed for him. I have never heard such words! And yet Glenn had saved his life!"

"Then mustn't there be some reason?"

"I don't know."

"Even jealousy, Louise?"

"How can you say such a thing! A hired man—and I've only known him a day or so!"

"How long did you know Glanvil?"

"Is that fair, Louise?"

"I know it is unkind. But isn't it necessary? Glanvil was strange—very unlike other men—stronger, more subtle. But Glanvil was a child compared with this new man."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it!"

"Why? Have you talked with him?"

"Enough to be afraid of him!"

"Afraid! You, Kate?"

"Yes."

"But what has he said or done?"

"He has turned a wild wolf into a dog to follow him around at his heels. That is something."

"Not a wolf!"

"I think it is. It never barks. You say yourself that it never wags its tail even for its master. It's a wolf, Louise.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And what sort of a man is this Glenn, then? He talks like an educated person. Yet he seems to want to play the part of a hired man. Is that reasonable?"

"But what could he gain?"

"I don't know. When he talks with you——"

"Well?"

"Is he ever—just a little—sentimental?"

"Not the slightest trace in the world."

"I don't understand, then."

"You are wrong, Kate."

"Perhaps."

"You are very, very wrong!"

But the blind girl shook her head, and Louise, feeling her anger at this stubbornness grow, left her in haste, fearful of the words which were rising to her teeth.

She sent for Glenn at once, and when he came, he stood before her with hat in his hand, and the sun streaming over that wrecked, disfigured face of his. And her heart was touched. And when she remembered what Jack Rutledge had said, her anger raged again.

"Mr. Glenn," she said, "I have come to let you know that you are in a grave danger, I'm afraid."

"I?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me from what?"

"From a man."

He frowned in a bewildered fashion. "Have you no enemies?" she asked.

"I hope not."

"No one you have offended?"

"I am a little impulsive, sometimes," said he. "I may have made enemies in that way."

"But no one you have wronged?"

"I think not."

"Then I intend to tell you the name of your enemy. It is Jack Rutledge!"

He fell back a step with an exclamation of dismay. "Jack Rutledge! But that's impossible!"

"Do you think so? So did I, but there is the fact. And if I were you, I should leave this part of the country—for a time."

"Miss Carney," he answered, "I never hunt danger, but I don't feel that I can start avoiding it. Why Rutledge should wish to harm me I cannot tell. Would he talk with you this morning?"

"He would not."

The face of Glanvil expressed the greatest solicitude.

"May I ask if he has been through some great mental strain recently?"

"I think not. Why do you ask?"

"He seems very much changed."

"It is true. I thought it was on account of you, Mr. Glenn."

"I hardly see how that can be—when we are such old friends, Miss Carney."

"Then I can't understand!"

"Nor I."

"What do you intend doing?"

"Living quietly and peaceably as I have been doing before. And hoping that no trouble comes my way. But if it comes, I shall have to be ready to meet it!"

After that, he left her and went back to his work, for since Buxton was away, he had the horses to care for. But work lay light on his hands this day. There was an inner music in his brain, for he knew from the words of the girl that she must have broken with Rutledge, or at least that she had come close to it.

An hour later a shadow fell across him from the window of the barn where he was brushing down a restless colt. He whirled, with his gun gliding out brightly into his hand and covered—Rutledge himself.

The big fellow did not so much as blink at the sight of the gun. He came in slowly, and sat down on top of the grain bin. He pushed back his hat and revealed a gloomy, drawn face.

He did not beat about the bush. He simply said: "I suppose you know why I've come?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I suppose that I know."

"You've beat me, Glanvil."

"Steady with that name. People may hear it."

"What if they do? That's a small matter to me. I'm already ruined in the eyes of the girl."

"Would you risk having her know that, too?"

"Not if I can avoid it. But I'm afraid that I'm lost. I've seen her, and then I've come to see Kate Preston."

"Ah?"

"You're interested in Kate, I see."

"Of course. What did she have to say?"

"She says that Louise is about finished with me."

"Very well, but what did she have to say about me?"

"Does that worry you?"

"No matter whether it does or not. Will you tell me?"

"I won't. The important point is Louise."

"She—why, you fool, she's nothing."

"What do you mean by that?"

"A dull-wit like you, dear Jack, can't be expected to understand that there's only one brain in that house, and that's the blind girl's. She does the thinking. What smashed me before? You? No, Kate Preston. I give you this as a hint. If you want to win back Louise, work at Kate. But she's too clever for you, dear Jack. I fear that you would make no progress with her. Even me she turns into a small boy."

Rutledge waved this lighter talk away. "The point is that Louise is finished with me. Your cunning lies—your simple, cunning lies—have torn me to bits, in her estimation."

"Not at all. I never criticized you. I merely put up a stone wall. You, like a jackass, dear Jack, smashed your head considerately against it. That is all that there is to it!"

Rutledge flushed. "Very well," said he. "I don't intend to start a quarrel."

"You are wise in that."

"I have simply come to tell you that you have won and find out what your price is."

"I have no price, Rutledge."

The big man sighed and shook his head. "It's no use bargaining," he said. "I know that your price will be pretty high. Well, man, I have a ranch that's free from all debt. I'm not any millionaire, but I have enough to live on. I can put on a mortgage for two thirds of the entire property. That is the limit of what I can raise, and that is the amount of money that you can have out of me. I tell you that in the first place, because I want to cut the deal short. Leave the country at once and stay away. I'll give you a series of notes. They'll be paid as they come due—so long as you are away."

"You discover then, dear Jack, that you cannot win while I'm at hand?"

"I cannot win. I told you that before."

"And when I give up her, what about you? Do you think that I have forgotten this?" And he ran the tip of his finger slowly over his scar.

"Money will heal that and put a mask over it."

"Tush, Rutledge. I intend to look at your dead body, man!"

"Will you stick at that?"

"With all my might! Besides, there is Lefty Hewitt——"

Rutledge grew suddenly pale. "What of him?" he asked.

"He and I have had a little talk. That is all! Is it enough?"

Apparently it was quite enough. For Rutledge rose from the grain bin and stepped back toward the door—stepped with a tense face and his hand gripping the butt of a gun which he seemed about to draw. He reached the open air, leaped sideways, and was gone. But Glanvil did not so much as follow to the door to see what was happening or whether his foe was stealing back toward

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him. He turned his back and went calmly on grooming the horse.

CHAPTER XXXII.

JUSTICE IS WORKING.

SO far as Glanvil could see, there was nothing for him to do, now, but to remain quiet and let the engines which he had started, continue to work for him. He had so far undermined the position of big Jack Rutledge with the girl that there appeared to be little left in him. More than that, the stage was perfectly set, so that when he fought and killed Rutledge, the entire community, and principally the girl herself, would be prepared to swear that it was self-defense.

This was perfection, and he decided to wait quietly through that day and allow the situation to come to a head. He spent some time comforting Mrs. Buxton before night, but, after the darkness closed down, he could hear her weeping in her room and the sound annoyed him. She was such a simple creature that, when he heard her grief, he felt as though he had misused his strength to hurt a helpless child.

He left the place and went down to the jail. There he paused to speak to Joe Conklin, and found that worthy much disturbed.

"I've left everything open for the fool," he said with great anxiety. "And now I want him to get out. It's dark now as it will be at midnight. There ain't no reason why he shouldn't slide out right away."

"What does he say?"

"He says that he doesn't understand, when I give him a hint. What more can I do?"

"He's a dull fellow," said Glanvil. "Let me go in and have a talk with him."

"If you can make sense out of him, you're a better man than me!"

In the cell he found Buxton as stolidly composed as ever.

"Look here," said Glanvil briskly, "your troubles are over."

"Are they?" asked Buxton without emotion, looking gravely up at the other.

"Certainly! We have found a way of opening the doors of the jail to you, man. All you have to do is walk out."

Buxton shook his head. "Conklin has been tellin' me that," he said.

"Don't you believe him?"

"I believe him, fast enough."

"Then why don't you walk out?"

"To what?"

"To freedom—what else?"

"What's freedom to me?"

"Good heavens, man, what do you mean? Do you prefer to spend twenty years in prison?"

"They got beds and chuck and regular hours in a prison. I dunno that a prison would bother me much. But if I got loose, what good would it do to Martha?"

"Why, you could take care of her. For that matter, Miss Carney will see to her."

"So she would if I was in prison. Besides, if I go to prison, it won't be more'n fifteen years, they say. I'm forty-five now. That'd let me out at sixty. And my family are long-livers. I'd still have ten or a dozen years left. But if I get out now, they'll chase me, most likely; they'll catch me. I ain't fast on my feet. I don't know the country very well, and I ain't a good-enough shot to live off what I'd hunt down. Nope, I'm going to stay right here. Besides, I'm not the man who held up the stage."

"Facts don't matter. Prison does. And they have you as good as in prison now."

"I'm innocent," persisted Buxton.

"Don't be a fool! Do you think that the real crook will confess to save you?"

"I hadn't thought of that. Maybe he will; maybe he won't. But I'll get off in the end."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How, man?"

"Being right is a pretty strong way to be. This here being in jail is my punishment because I started out *intending* to rob the stage. But they'll never keep me long in prison for something that I didn't do. There's a sort of a justice in the world, I guess."

"You guess what I don't know. You're a lost man, Buxton, unless you walk out to-night."

"I'm a lost man if I *do* walk out. I ain't cut out for sleeping cold in the hills the rest of my life—till I'm caught again. I'll see this through. When I was a kid, I used to see that when I was right, no matter what the old man accused me of, they found out I'd been telling the truth, and that made me stronger than ever. It'll turn out that same way now!"

Glanvil wondered at him. After all, there was a quiet force about this stupid fellow that bewildered him. It was a rock which he could not budge.

"Are you fixed in your mind?"

"Pretty solid, Glenn. I'm thankin' you just the same."

Glanvil left him and went to Conklin.

"The fool won't budge. He's afraid to take the chance of being hunted down."

A long silence followed this remark. Then: "That money—Glenn. I got it put away. I'll bring it down to you to-morrow, I guess."

"You had the right intentions," said Glanvil. "So keep the money and get that plow team. Good night."

He left Conklin gaping after him and went off into the night—went with fury in his heart against Buxton, against the entire world, and chiefly against himself.

He had done worse things than this in his life, and there was no real reason why the imprisonment of Buxton for a crime which he had not committed should have weighed so heavily upon him. And yet the weight was there in spite of all his arguing with himself. And he found it a crushing burden. To smash a Rutledge was one thing; to break a Buxton was quite another. And the words of Buxton still rang at his ears: "There's a sort of justice in the world!"

After all, the man was right. There *is* a sort of justice in the world. Of all the brainy men whom he had known, fellows of infinite experience in wrongdoing, how many had ever escaped from the penalties of their crimes? There were years of gay prosperity, to be sure, but in the end, they were caught. Usually it was some accomplice who betrayed them. But very often the most trifling slip in the most trifling manner turned into the weapon which struck them down.

There is a sort of justice in the world!

Here was Jack Rutledge, most honest among the law-abiding. A clean-hearted man. He had committed one crime, and that was his brutal treatment of Glanvil himself. And what was his reward? The loss of the woman he loved, a broken spirit, a soul so disintegrated and cowed that the fellow hired a murderer to work for him! And that was the working out of a single taint!

He looked back upon his own life. There were a thousand clever wrongs which he had done to society. But what had been his profit from them? In the end, he had been fleeing into the mountains, whipped, beaten, pursued, outcast from mankind. And in those mountains he had found the fruit of the first really good act in his existence—his kindness to the she-wolf and to the cub.

Here was the reward of that kindness. The King slid along at his heels. And, somewhere before them, the gray mother was lurking in the woods, keeping her eyes upon them both, ready to defend them from all assailants, as she had defended them once before on the very night preceding! And more than

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that—for the thing which he had done to the King was that, also, which seemed to have disarmed Kate Preston against him. It was this which she could not understand. It was this which had made her say that she felt a secret beauty in his life and in his soul.

And he felt, after all, that to have won her esteem even in a partial measure, was the greatest achievement of his life. As for Louise Carney, she was a light thing. She had loved him one year; the next she was ready to marry the man who had struck him down; and now, again, she had turned from her second man toward the first. There would be other turns in her life, perhaps. But the blind girl was a soul of iron, true always to herself.

All of these things poured through the thoughts of Glanvil as he strode up the slope toward the Carney place. And still, wherever he looked with sharp eyes into his past he found the truth of what Buxton had said. There was a deep justice in the world which found out the doers of good and crushed the doers of evil. He had felt the sting of the whip once before; it never cut so deep as these silent thoughts of his!

When he reached the barn he went at once to the room of Mrs. Buxton and tapped at the door. She opened it presently and looked out on him with a red, swollen face.

"Well, Mr. Glenn?" she said. "There ain't any news? You ain't been down to see my Harry?"

"I have been down to see him."

Her eyes lighted dimly. "What did he have to say?"

"He said a good many things. His spirits are not low."

"He's brave. But what good'll bravery do him, Mr. Glenn? What good when they land him in prison?"

"They'll never land him there!" said Glanvil out of a sudden conviction. "He's innocent!"

"Ah, but can they be provin' that?"

"There'll be some way found!"

She shook her head. "You're tryin' to cheer me up, Mr. Glenn. That's kind, but it ain't true. My Harry's bound for the penitentiary!"

"You must not think so. I am so sure that I'll give you my word he will be set free and all the disgrace wiped away from him."

She had begun to blubber again, the tears running fast down her face, but now she wiped away her tears. She peered out at him in wonder and happiness, saying: "Do you mean that?"

"I do," said he, "and the reason is very plain. There is a sort of justice in the world, although it often seems to be working blindly, to us!"

"God bless you!" said she. "I feel a mighty lot comforted, Mr. Glenn."

"Trust it to me," said he. "Harry will be brought safely through."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CONFESSION.

IT was still a young night, and since he had the thought swelling in him, he decided that he would act now, because he was in a sort of terror that, by the time the morning came, the heat of the first good impulse might leave him.

He turned about, called the King to him, and started off again down the steep hill toward the town, and as he went, he was singing lightly, happily, and hardly aware of his song.

He passed the garden, and as he went, the King growled softly at his heels and then ran to his side. He followed, and just beyond the garden fence he found the King, standing high, with his great forepaws on the shoulders of Kate Preston, that same strange group which he had surprised once before. He stopped to wonder at it.

The moon had been up for some time now, and its slant radiance fell full on the face of the blind girl, and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on her dark eyes, and on her faint smile.

He said out of a sudden strong impulse: "When I go, I must leave the King behind me, with you, Miss Preston!"

She pushed the King away and came slowly to the fence.

"Why would you do that?" she asked.

"Because the best half of life is lost to you, now."

"What is the best half?"

"What dogs and horses will give us, Miss Preston."

"Do you put them above people?"

"Yes, because they are all we can be sure of. Even our brothers and sisters may have secret impulses behind what they say and do for us. But when a dog licks your hand, you know what is in his heart, and when he wags his tail for you, it means only one thing."

"Yes," said she.

"And what else is there in the world that will love you simply because it serves you? Here is Silver King, who has known you only a day or so, but he would lay down his life for you. That is love, Miss Preston."

"It is, indeed! So you would leave him?"

"Yes."

"You would miss him, though?"

"I can find another."

"Like him?"

"Not exactly."

"That is the cruel thing about men," said she. "One thing will do them about as well as another. If they miss one dog, they can take another. And if they miss one woman, they can find another. They will be only a little less happy with her. Isn't that true?"

"Perhaps it is. Are women different?"

"Oh, very!"

"Tell me how."

"There are no duplications with them, you see. Perhaps it's because they don't own things—they are owned, instead. A man puts his wife down in the midst of a list—his work, his dogs, his horses, his house, his land, his friends—and the wife may have a high place in the list. She may even come at the head of it. But, after all, she is not all of it."

"Is that otherwise with women?"

"I think you are laughing at me. You know just as much about these matters as I do."

"I know nothing about them—on my word of honor. I know nothing at all about women. It is you, Miss Preston, who convince me of that fact. But tell me honestly—do you think that a woman's husband can be a really engrossing part of her life—after the first year or so of romance—after the newness is worn from the polish? After the mornings are found to be as blue as ever? Doesn't the same time come for them?"

"I don't think so."

"Is a man really first in their eyes, then?"

She paused. "No," she said at last.

"You admit it after all, honestly."

"His children come first with her, I suppose. No, I'm not even sure of that." She added with her faint smile: "We are talking very intimately."

"I suppose we are. However, you shall have the King."

"I could never take him."

"Will you refuse him, then?"

"Of course."

"Why do you say 'of course.' I could not take it for granted."

"Think a moment and you will. If I had King Silver for mine, he would be mine in name only. There cannot be two masters. He is single-hearted. He may like me well enough, but that is because he knows that he has you in the background. He can turn to you. But if he were alone with me, half the time he would have his head raised, and he would be watching the horizon to see you come back. He would be listening for your voice through the sound

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of mine. Oh, I am very sure of that!"

"I am not. However, it shall be the way you wish."

"I could never be happy with him unless he were all mine."

"Will you use that same rule for everything?"

"Yes."

"That's rather a hard line to draw. Will you let me ask you a very blunt question?"

"I suppose blunt questions are in order."

"Tell me, Miss Preston, if you have ever cared for any man—in this wholehearted way?"

She paused, at that.

"You don't have to answer, of course," he hastened to qualify.

"Well," she said, "I know you are not a chatterer. And I suppose that I may tell you. Yes!"

He gaped at her in a deep bewilderment. She had always seemed to him like a standing water, clear and calm, with all her inner nature so perfectly protected that never a breeze could have ruffled the surface.

"I should never have guessed it," said he. "According to that, you have found the one man who can ever enter your life?"

"Yes, and lost him."

"Ah?" said he, not a little moved. "I should like to ask you a hundred questions."

She made another of her serious pauses. Then she astonished him more than ever by saying quietly: "I should like to have you. I have never talked of this to a human soul before. And a little talk is good for one, I suppose."

"You have never talked of it even to Miss Carney?"

"Not even to her. But there is a little poetry in men that makes them capable of understanding by imagination, I think. Then I know that what I say to you will be forgotten forever!"

"It shall be exactly as you wish, of course. Tell me one thing. The man——"

"Oh," she said with perfect frankness, "you may speak right out."

"He cared for you, of course, as you cared for him?"

"No, he detested me, I suppose."

"What a strange story!"

"Is it?"

"He never spoke to you of love?"

"He did not address more than a hundred words to me in all the time I knew him. That was only a few days."

"I can hardly understand."

"I suppose it sounds rather odd. But he came over me with a wonderful clearness the first time I met him—like something I could see. Yes, I seemed to have eyes, and I could see him. He had a beautiful face. I knew that before people told me about it. His voice was music. It seemed to me, always, that when I was near him I could look down into every crevice of his soul and see his keenness, his clever ways, his clear mind, his perfect evil."

"Evil?" cried Glanvil, once again taken back.

"Yes, his evil. There was no good in him, I think. He was one of those unspeakable creatures who go about the world preying on women."

A chill struck through the very soul of Glanvil. He had not dreamed it until this moment, but now he found himself listening to a confession that she had loved him—Glanvil himself! She who had struck him down! He grew a little dizzy at the thought. And staring at her again, the darkness seemed to leave her eyes, and the pallor left her face. She was like a white blossom, delicately touched with dawn colors, fragrant under the cold moon.

"He was all evil," she went on. "He was selfish, cruel, mean-thoughted, but he was also strong. And, somehow, I could see him so clearly—I could understand him so perfectly! I knew even

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what was in his mind before he spoke. I could always feel his hatred of me."

"It could not have been hatred. It might have been awe and a little fear, but not hatred. And—he never knew?"

"Oh, no. After all, I sent him to his death, you see. And the last he could know of me was to feel that I had loathed him and hunted him down."

"But did you do it?"

"Yes. He had tangled my dearest friend in that artful net of his. He was drawing her down. And I, seeing what he was, had to strike at him."

"He was killed, then?"

"Yes. They caught him and beat him—like a dog!" She flushed, and her breath came hard.

"You didn't expect that, of course?"

"I thought that they would kill him—not humiliate him. Besides, there was something else in him which I had never dreamed of."

"And that?"

"Oh, it was the virtue of all! I said that he was perfectly evil. But I don't mean that. Because he had one saving grace which makes us almost respect the devil himself! He had courage! He had a quiet, still, perfect courage—like yours, Mr. Glenn!"

It was as though she had stabbed him with a blade of ice.

And she went on, before he could speak in answer to her: "In the end, he out-faced them all. I have heard that they flogged him until the blood leaped out from his back. But he did not murmur. He stood it until he collapsed. Afterward, while he was reeling with weakness, he took a gun and went into the house and faced them—and shot down the strongest of them all! Then he fled away!"

"But you said that he died?"

"One of their bullets must have reached him. His horse came back to the village, after a while, and a day or two later, they found his body more than half destroyed. He was buried decently, however. I persuaded Louise. And I had her put the right epitaph over his grave."

"And this is the man, then, whom you chose to love? This sneaking heart stealer? I can't believe it!"

"No, I suppose that you cannot. Oh, I haven't told you all of it. After you have been near us a little longer, other people will tell you more. He was a gambler and a cheat. He had a thousand vices. Why I cared for him, I cannot tell. But I did—with all my heart, with all my heart!"

"Not a soul has guessed it, then?"

"Not a soul. I don't know what has made me talk to you to-night. Except that from the first moment I met you, you reminded me of his dead voice and something of his ways, too. Except that you are stronger and quieter and simpler. Do you know that at first a wild, wild thought came over me?"

"And what was that?"

"That you were he! But then I found the Silver King, and I knew that I was wrong. Besides, I heard that you had gray hair and a fearfully scarred face. You see that I still am talking frankly? But it was the King who convinced me. He would never have wasted his time over a dumb beast. Never! Well, Mr. Glenn, I have told you a long story and an odd one. It will be very safe with you, I know."

"On my honor!"

"I do believe you."

She had spoken all this time with a perfectly controlled voice, never raised so much as a half tone above her usual calm manner; now her voice trembled a little.

"I am going inside. It is a little cold, Mr. Glenn. Good night!"

She turned and hurried away. It was almost, indeed, as though she were fleeing away from him, but he knew better. For it was the memory of that other man, dead to her, from which she was fleeing, and from which she would flee

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as long as she lived. Glanvil turned about with his brain spinning, and went slowly down the hill.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RETURN OF HOLDUP MONEY.

HE could not walk steadily on. Every score of steps he had to pause while a thrust of something like cold dread entered his heart and took his breath. She of all women had loved him! She of all women!

Aye, and might she not love him still? Might not one word waken that love in her once more? If he were to say "Glanvil" in her ear, might not all the living emotion in her rush out to him? If she had loved him once, she could love him still. Aye, perhaps she was loving this new Glanvil even now, only kept back by the feeling that her other dream was dead and buried and that half of her heart was buried with his body!

He stopped and put his hand against a slender young poplar which trembled through all its delicate body at the weight he put against it. He who loved experiments in emotion—what could he find in the world that would mean as much as to see this girl flush into life and vividness, and lift her face to him?

It was to Glanvil like the gold digger's dream of ripping the surface away from the mother lode where the wealth of a thousand kingdoms is stored in yellow gold. It was more than that. For what was gold compared with her? What was any other creature? So, breathing deep, half smiling to himself through the darkness of the night, he stumbled on; and lovely Louise Carney and her millions, now drawn so close to him, began to seem like any common creature, and all of her treasure was less than dirt to him!

For what was there in the world to compare with Kate?

So, half drunkenly, he went on. And he said to himself, that already an influence was shining from her and striking across his path—striking in a gleaming radiance across his path.

For it had seemed very hard, very hard indeed, to do this thing which was before him. But now it was simplicity itself, and what he was to give away was nothing—nothing at all of value!

The sheriff's house stood at the farthest end of the street, and straight toward it he went. All the lower floor was dark except for one window, and through that window he saw the sheriff himself seated. Good fortune made him be alone! There he was a prepared prey!

He would have paused to consider, at any other time, but now with this ecstasy in him, all seemed simplicity itself. He knotted a handkerchief around the lower part of his face, again, and he dragged his hat lower across his eyes. Then he took hold on the sill of the window and worked himself up—worked himself up until with a flick of his lithe body he was through and stood in the room with his revolver covering the startled face of the sheriff. The latter had only had time to drop his newspaper, which was still fluttering away across the floor, borne on a gentle draft.

"What in Heaven's name are you," asked the sheriff.

"I'll tell you after a while," said Glanvil, and, backing across the room, he reached the door and closed it gently behind him, then turned the key in the lock.

"It's 'Red' Wainwright," said the sheriff, leaning forward suddenly in his chair. "Well, Red, I know what you've come for."

"What have I come for, then?"

"You've come to threaten to blow my head off if I don't turn Tom loose. Is that it?"

"What if I have?"

"I know your voice, now. I wasn't sure before. Well, Red, I'll tell you

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what about it! If that there was a cannon instead of a Colt that you got in your hand, and if it was loaded with 'soup' and steel instead of powder and lead, I'd tell you to blaze away and send me to hell or heaven, whichever way I'm bound to go, but I'd never bring Tom one step nearer to bein' loose!"

Glanvil nodded. He had not liked the sheriff before. He had felt that the fellow was a wholly disagreeable law hound and taker of the erring. But he changed his mind willingly now. And still it seemed to him that the sweetness and the light from Kate swept across the world and changed all men and brought out of them strange, bright deeds, like flowers on a desert.

"You're a dead man, then, sheriff," he said with all the grimness that he could put into his voice.

"Then God help my soul—and God help yours, for a sneakin', murderin' skunk, Red Wainwright."

"I'll take my chances on Him."

"You're a gent that boasts about how fast you pull a gun and how straight you shoot. Gimme half of an even break and we'll try you out, Red."

"I'm not a fool, sheriff. But suppose we switch the subject a little bit. Suppose that we turn around and take a look at something else. You won't let Tom go. Well, would you let anybody else go?"

"Not if I was to get a million dollars the next minute. I've lived square, and I'll die square. I took an oath when I landed in this here office, and I'll stick by that oath until hell freezes."

"Hell will freeze, too," said Glanvil, filled with wonder and with admiration, "when it hears that there's an honest man on earth. Hell will freeze solid to the bottom of the pit."

"You're kidding me a mite now, I suppose, Red. Well, kid away."

"Have you got prayers to say, sheriff?"

"I ain't a prayin' man. Lemme light a cigarette. There I am. Now turn loose the lead, Wainwright. I'm finished with talking."

"It's about Harry Buxton."

The sheriff started. "Him? What you got to do with a simple old gent like him? What's he to you, Wainwright?"

"I was sort of tickled by the yarn he told."

"Him standing by and seein' another gent rob the stage? That was sort of weak lyin'. And him caught with a gun and a mask on him. Well, what about it?"

"The mask that they found on him was black. The mask that the crook used that held up the stage, sheriff, was white."

"White? White? Who ever said anything about a white mask? I don't remember that in the testimony."

"No one ever asked the question about the mask. Every one is too happy to have a goat for this affair—a lamb to slaughter, you might say."

"You've picked up a fancy lingo, lately, Red. Darned if you ain't talkin' high and pretty!"

"Because I'm not Red Wainwright, sheriff!"

"You ain't? By the heavens, I begin to sort of have my doubts about it, too!"

"But about Buxton. You yourself, sheriff, must have felt that it was an odd thing that a man like Buxton should commit a crime like that—as cool and as professional a crime as that?"

"It was smooth work. I admit that. I've laid awake and thought about it. It sure don't seem like Harry's work! I admit all of that!"

"And then there is the matter of the masks?"

"Maybe—maybe! How come you to know what sort of a mask the crook was wearin'?"

"Very simply. I am the man who robbed the coach, you see!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hell and fire!" muttered the sheriff. "What's happening here? Are you tryin' to make a saint out of yourself? Tryin' to beg Buxton off from jail? Tryin' fix me on your trail?"

"I smile at that, sheriff. The lame and the halt and the blind and the crippled like Harry Buxton are for you, but not the fellow who really steps about and uses the devil—as I do!"

"Young feller, who might you be?"

"Tush, tush, sheriff! You mustn't skip to the end of the book like that! You must read the story all the way through. What I want to know first of all is: Are you set on sending poor fat little Harry Buxton to prison for the rest of his life while his wife dies of a broken heart—the little fool!"

"Martha is a pretty good woman and a darned good cook," said the sheriff reminiscently.

"Are you set on that?"

"I can't say that I'm set on nothin'. Except that I'd like to see the mask off'n your face for about a second!"

"Would you? It would do you no good, because you'll never have a glimpse of that face again. However, let us come back to the point of our argument. Will you tell me, finally, what I am to expect? You have plenty of influence. You could go to the people who are pressing the charges against Buxton. They have scattered, all of them. There is only the messenger who remains to be a witness against him. Suppose that you could go to the men who employed that messenger and say to them: 'I can give you back your money if you will drop all of the charges against Buxton.'"

"Give back twelve thousand dollars?"

"I said that."

"By the heavens, stranger, how can little Buxton be worth that much to you or to any other man?"

"I tell you, sheriff, I am a man to whom money is dirt."

"You're crazy, stranger."

"Not crazy, but happy—happy—happy, sheriff!"

And he laughed, but all his laughter did not shake the revolver he held an iota. The sheriff took heed of this and bit his lip.

"There would still be other little difficulties," went on Glanvil. "There would be the judge. But you know that judge very well. It would be a popular case, sheriff. You have only to let this whole story be known—of how a man came to you and confessed that he committed the robbery, and that you want Buxton set free. Let that be known, and it will make you a popular man. You and the judge can have Buxton out of jail before to-morrow noon!"

"Well, I suppose that we could. But that money would have to talk pretty plain first!"

A packet came into the free hand of Glanvil and was dropped on the floor.

"Count it," he said.

The sheriff raised it with reverence.

"If they's twelve thousand dollars in here," he said, "I don't open it even a crack without witness. And if they ain't twelve thousand dollars in here, Buxton don't get no good out of it."

He added, peering at Glanvil: "That's a pretty white thing you are aimin' to do, young stranger! Pretty white, I'd tell a man!"

"Thanks, sheriff. It's amusing, anyway!"

"Only—by the heavens, I'd like to see how you can get twelve thousand dollars' worth of use out of Harry Buxton!"

"I want to see justice done to him, sheriff. Justice is worth more than that, eh? Just now, for instance, you wouldn't sell justice for the sake of your life!"

"Well," said the sheriff, "for a crook and a stage robber, you got me beat!"

"But after all," said Glanvil, "you have to admit that there is a sort of justice in the world!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There is, son, there is! The quitters and the yaller skunks in the world is the ones that are always hollerin' about the raw deals they're gettin'. But the men are the ones that stand up and admit that they get what's comin' to 'em. Now, young feller, I'd give a good deal to know who you might be!"

"You'd give a good deal to see me behind bars, old-timer, but you'll never have that privilege. Good night."

He reached the door, unlocked it, and bowed himself out.

The sheriff, for his part, did not make the slightest attempt to pursue. He sat still, rigid, like one in a trance, seeing strange things beyond this world.

"He talked slick and pretty," said the sheriff. "He talked smooth and easy. He didn't have no trouble with his words!"

He closed his eyes and contracted his brows. "He talked," said the sheriff in a whisper to himself, "mighty like somebody that I've heard talk before. Who might that of been? Who might that of been?

"Oh," groaned the sheriff, rising and pacing the floor back and forth, "what a blind fool I am. Why can't I see? I know his voice easy and plain as I know my own!"

Up and down that floor he paced, and up and down it, through a long hour.

He heard the voice of his wife, but he paced on.

"Are you comin' upstairs to bed this here minute?"

Who could think with such a wail in one's ears? The sheriff rushed to the door and cast it open in a frenzy of rage.

"Darn it," he shouted. "Leave a man be! You'd hang an innocent man for the sake of five minutes of sleep. Lemme be! Lemme be!"

There began a jangling torrent of words in answer, but the sheriff strode back into the room, breathing hard, triumphant. About once a month he raised his voice in that house, and about once a month he was heard. Those days were set apart from all the rest—strenuous but joyful.

And now, in the midst of his anger, the memory for which he had been struggling came sweetly and suddenly back upon him. There was another man in the town who spoke good English, English as fine as that of Jack Rutledge, even. And this man was of the size of him who wore the mask. It was, in fact, none other than that mysterious new hired man on the Carney place, he who had dared to cross the sheriff's potent self not long before!

He, then, was the real robber of the stage!

The sheriff stretched out his long arms and smote his hands together. Not the joy of Glanvil hurrying down the mountain was greater than the joy of the sheriff on the man trail. Much was still to be learned, and much was still to be kept secret. But the certainty of victory was big in the sheriff's heart!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE GUN FIGHT.

THE sun was halfway up the sky of the next morning when Jack Rutledge stood before the lady of his love at the end of his last appeal.

"What I've come to ask you, Louise," he said, "is whether or not I can hope for anything. Not because of what I said in the last interview we had together, but because of everything that went before."

"It's everything that went before that makes this last talk so bad," she answered coldly. "Because it looks, Jack, as though you could keep on for many years playing the part of the virtuous man, and not being one. And, in fact, I'm afraid of you. I thought you were a simple person—like me. But I've found that you are not. I've found that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you are very far from simple! There's malice and hate under that bluff exterior of yours!"

"Is that all?" said he.

"I've wanted to speak calmly and quietly," said the girl. "But I can't. I'm sorry—but I can't. Oh, Jack, when you rushed in between me and the man I loved, I thought you came like a selfless hero. Not like this thing that I find you are!"

"You will never forgive me?" he asked.

"Never!"

"If there were ever any love for me in your heart——"

"Oh, there was never a great deal. But I was sorry for you and I thought——"

"Well," he said sadly, "after all, he was right. He was always right!"

"Who was right?"

"Glanvil."

"You promised me that I should never hear that name again!"

"Did I promise that?" he asked her without heat. "Why, my dear, I might as well have promised that you would not hear the wind or the rain. However, that was what he said—that you only pitied me. First it made me rage; then it made me sad; and I began to guess that he might have seen the truth more clearly than I!"

"I don't understand all of this. When could you have talked to Winsor Glanvil about such a thing?"

"My dear, that is what I am about to explain. This precious fellow of yours—this noble heart—this life saver—this John Glenn——"

"I shall not stay to hear you talk any longer," she exclaimed with dignity. "I have not come to listen to scandal-mongering!"

"That becomes you," said he dispassionately. "I like to see you stand so stiff and so straight!"

She could only wonder at him. He stood before her with a lean, haggard face, his eyes pouched beneath with purple, his head sunk between his shoulders. He had aged; he had grown feeble, and his big hands hung loosely at his sides.

"If my love for you has died," said the girl, "it is not hard to see that yours went out at the same time!"

He shook his head, watching her with a sick smile. "My love for you will last till I am dead," he answered her. "But just now, I'm sick of living. I'm ready to die. And I think that I shall die before the day is ended—unless John Glenn shoots slower and less straight than I think he does. However, I simply see what a hopeless mess I am in. There is no use in struggling. I'm beaten. I'm down and smashed. Well—there's an end of that! I don't whine! I thought, three days ago, that I was just around the corner from heaven, and then Glenn came. I suppose you and he will probably be married, after I'm gone?"

She flushed and set her teeth. "Married?" said she. "With my serving man? How else will you be able to insult me, Jack, before you have decided to leave me?"

"Don't you see?" he explained in his heavy, dull voice. "It isn't Glenn. That's not the name!"

"What do you mean?"

"All the rot about the saving of my life—surely you must have guessed that there was something wrong in that. Or did you really think that I could be such an ungrateful cur? No, no, Louise, it's not Glenn. That's not the name, but one very like it."

"What do you mean, Jack?" she asked him, panting with something between horror and hope and fear.

"Oh, yes, you've guessed it at last. Glanvil—it's Glanvil again, Louise. Come back from the dead in the most romantic fashion imaginable!"

"It's Winsor Glanvil come back!" she gasped out. "No, I can't believe it!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Send for him. Bring him up here."

"You want him because you want to spring on him with your strength, Jack——"

"I'll not touch him. My word for that. I'll do him no harm."

She ran into the house and sent the cook scurrying down the hill to the barn. Then she came back and walked up and down in the garden with Rutledge. Still she was not satisfied. She sent for Kate Preston, and the blind girl hurried out to her.

"We have just heard a strange rumor," said Louise Carney; "about my new man—Glenn!"

"It's something wrong? It is something bad?" asked Kate.

"You've guessed that, then?"

"I don't know," said she, and she clasped her hands together.

"Kate, you look sick."

"I—I have had a bad headache. I'm quite all right."

"I want you to watch his words while I confront him with an unspeakable thing that I have just heard."

"I shall watch."

"You, Jack, stand there, if you please. Oh, if this is true!"

"I thought," said Rutledge, "that you would be glad!"

"Glad?" she said, and she flashed a furious glance at him. "A man who tried to—to marry my money?"

"What are you talking of? What *are* you talking of, Louise?"

"It's too strange, too horrible—wait a moment and then you'll hear. Now he's coming. And taking his time. There is something about his walk that is the same, now that I look at him more closely. There is something about the way he carried his head that is the same."

The blind girl pressed closer. "The same as who?" she asked huskily.

"I mustn't say—yet! Wait until he comes!"

So Glanvil came into the garden and looked at the stern, quivering face of Louise Carney and the gloomy frown of Rutledge and the great, staring eyes of the blind girl.

He knew at once what sort of a crisis was before him.

"It is about you—Jack Rutledge has been here to talk to me about you, this morning—Mr. Glenn."

"Mr. Glenn" bowed to them both.

"Mr. Rutledge is very kind," said he. "And he tells me a strange thing that cannot be believed unless you confirm it with your own lips."

"Indeed?"

"Mr. Glenn, I want to tell you that nearly a year ago a creature came to this house—a typical fortune hunter—a smooth-tongued liar—a deceiver—a practiced love-maker. And he made a fool of me. I thought I loved him and I promised to marry him. At the last minute it was discovered that the creature was a fraud of the rankest kind. I had eloped with him; they only stopped us at the minister's. And since that time I have been living in a perfect hell of criticism. Oh, I have been sick with it all! Do you know what else I have to say?"

"I begin to guess."

"Then it is true. You are Winsor Glanvil!"

There was a little gasping cry; but no one turned.

"It is true," said Glanvil. "I only wished to keep the false name until I saw that I had broken matters between you and Rutledge. But now that that's done—why, I wash my hands of you, my dear."

"You are Glanvil?" cried the girl.

"I am Winsor Terence Glanvil, very much at your service. You owe equal thanks to Rutledge and to me. He kept you from marrying a rascal. I kept you from marrying a fool, which would have been a much worse fate. Kate!"

He leaped to her and caught her as

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she swayed. Then Rutledge brushed him aside, picked the slender body out of his arms, and carried the girl into the house.

"What have you done to her?" asked Louise Carney. "Dear God, if you have been tampering with *her* soul, I'll have you——"

He raised his hand. "At present," said he, "I feel hardly fit to take her name in my mouth. Are you more qualified?"

"This, at least," said the girl, "is the last time that you and I need to lay eyes upon one another! It is the very last day."

"The very last, indeed. I shall be off your place in an hour."

In place of answering, she turned her back on him and hurried into the house, head down. At the door she met big Rutledge coming out.

She hesitated, then laid a hand on his arm.

"I wronged you a great deal, Jack," said she. "I accused you——"

"Hush," said he. "All that you thought was less than the truth. Let me tell you the rest of that, so that you can truly despise me! Louise, I went so far as to hire a murderer to take the life of that demi-devil!"

"Jack!"

"That is the truth. My man failed. Every one, I suppose, fails when they stand before him. However——"

He did not complete the sentence but left the house at once and went to his horse. Louise Carney, having disappeared into the house, changed her mind and jerked the door open again. But as she did so, and even as she called his name again, she saw him spur his horse, a towering black charger, down the hill. And her call was lost in the rush and roar of the hoofbeats.

Down the hill he swept and reached the hotel with its broad, time-yellowed veranda which had once been shining with white paint. He called a boy to him, who stood by, wiggling his toes in the hot dust and looking up the heaving sides of the great black horse.

"Here's fifty cents for you, young one," said Rutledge. "Go up the hill to the Carney place. Do you know the stranger?"

"John Glenn? Sure, we all know him, all right!"

"Tell him that I'm waiting for him, here, with plenty of men around to watch the two of us!"

The boy stared a moment, as though drinking in the full significance behind these words. Then he whirled and bolted up the street and up the hill.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

KATE AND GLANVIL.

HARRY BUXTON sat enthroned. The stove radiated heat near by. His wife was bustling eagerly around him. And at the window leaned the graceful form and the hideous face of Glanvil.

"How it happened," said Buxton, "I dunno. All I know is that the sheriff himself come to me in my cell.

"'Harry,' says he, 'are you feeling fit to walk around this morning?'

"'Fit to walk around this here cell, anyways,' says I.

"'Old son,' says he, 'you're free! You're fixed up with the judge and the gent that says that he done the robbery. He come in and turned in all the money that was lost. The judge says that you can vamose so long as we have you handy to put our hands on. And I guess that you ain't a very roving nacher.'

"'Sheriff,' says I, 'I hate travel.'

"And here I am. That's all that I know. They say that the gent come down with a mask on and stuck up the sheriff and give up the money and made him promise to get me out of the jail.

"And there you are. There's a sort of justice in this little old world. They

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

don't take innocent men! Not nowadays!"

There was a tap at the door. Mrs. Buxton opened it.

"Mr. Glenn here?" asked a boy's voice.

"I'm here, son."

"There's big Jack Rutledge down in town on the hotel porch. He say that he's waitin' for you. And he says that there's plenty of folks standing by to watch the two of you; and I dunno what he means, but that's what he says for me to tell you."

"What did he give you?"

"Fifty cents, mister. I didn't ask for it!"

"Here's a dollar. Go back and tell him that I'm coming. In five minutes I'll be there."

So the youngster fled, and Glanvil left the room. He left a heavy silence behind him.

"What does that mean, wife?" asked Harry Buxton, his little eyes shining wide.

"Trouble," she whispered, "and terrible trouble if it's between Rutledge and him."

"I wonder does the sheriff know?"

"Harry, Harry, you keep out of it!"

"There's some sort of justice—and the sheriff had ought to know about this here message. I'm gonna beat across the lot and tell him!"

He leaped up and dashed from the barn hatless, and raced away as fast as his short legs could carry him. He found the sheriff behind his house, busy saddling a horse in front of his barn.

"Hey!" he called.

"Are you hurryin' back to jail?" asked the sheriff, grinning.

"There's hell a-popping. Rutledge has sent for John Glenn and told him that they's plenty of folks standing by to watch the two of them. Watch them do what, I'd like to know. Fight, I'd say. And fight about what? I dunno!"

The sheriff turned and gave the other one an eloquent glance. Then he leaped into the saddle without a word and raced off up the street at the full speed of his horse.

But in the meantime, Glanvil had long since left the barn and strode down the hill with Silver King at his heels. Straight down the street he went, and not a dog dared appear to snarl at the black monster or the monster's master.

He went shyly, lightly. Yonder, standing before the veranda of the hotel, which was littered with idlers, stood the great form of Jack Rutledge. He remembered how, on a day, he had sat at a window at that same hotel and looked down and across the street at the monstrous form of the man with Paul Santelle at his shoulder, telling the formidable story of a formidable man. Things had changed since then. The dimensions of Rutledge had shrunk. And Glanvil himself had grown.

In the shadow beside him, it seemed that the great form of Hector Glanvil, that fearless man, was striding. But the life of Hector had been pure and free from blame. What could be said of his own existence?

He hardly knew what to think of himself. At least, he would tell himself no comforting lies. He had been like a fox, at the first, a sneaking thief of things he did not work for. Then he had turned into a wolf, furious and strong and eager to prey on others.

There was something new in him, now. Here he had before him the completion of his work. He had wrecked one part of the life of this Jack Rutledge. The taking of the life itself remained for the making of a full and a perfect revenge. And yet, as he drew nearer to the big man, he felt no surge of fury in his heart, no lust to destroy.

Now he was close. He paused, with the sun slanting across his face and the dreadful scar glinting like polished silver.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Rutledge," he said, "I'm willing to call quits if you say the word."

"Call quits?" cried Rutledge. "Man, there's nothing left me worth living for. Perhaps there'll be something worth dying for. Defend yourself, Glanvil!"

And he snatched at his gun. As well might the house dog fat with lazy life attempt to outspeed the leap of the wolf. The gun of Glanvil spoke before that of the mountaineer was clear of the holster. He sagged at the knees. From his hand his Colt dropped and was buried in the deep dust. Then he himself fell face forward. A thin white cloud puffed up around him. But he did not stir.

There was a sudden shouting. And men leaped from the veranda and ran toward the prostrate figure. But Glanvil was calmly mounting the big black horse and galloping away toward safety down the street.

Behind him came the sheriff with a rush.

But the horseflesh which the sheriff bestrode would never overtake Rutledge's big black, and the sheriff knew it. He paused, therefore, to make out the extent of the damage done to Rutledge. It was far less than had seemed. The head of Rutledge had swayed back because the bullet had glanced across his forehead, turned halfway from his foe as he jerked at his own gun to fire. The pellet had furrowed the bone deep, but Jack Rutledge was both breathing and groaning when the sheriff leaned above him.

He waited to learn no more. After all, it was not a murderer or a gun fighter whom he was to pursue, but only a thief, and that took half of the charm from his work. A thief, and one who had voluntarily given back his gains!

Altogether, it was not nearly so important a trail as he had expected. Moreover, the very proof of the theft was still dim and distant. He could say only one thing—that he thought he had recognized in the voice of the masked man who had held him up the night before, the voice of Glenn—or Glanvil. Both names seemed to be on the tongues of people now. That would be most shadowy stuff to put before a judge and a jury!

However he rode on, and picked up two able assistants to help him in the trailing. That trail led deep into the woods, and through the mountains, at first. Shortly after noon they lost it altogether. The afternoon was half worn away when they picked it up again after much cutting for sign, and then they found to their surprise that the tracks headed back for the town.

Straight back they went, with the sheriff following in wonder and disbelief. Straight back, and through the gathering dusk he and his men followed the sign—easily legible in the wet dirt—across the outskirts of the town and then up the hill toward the Carney house.

A scant hundred yards away the sheriff and the others dismounted, threw their reins, and stole forward.

"For he's sure to be here," said the sheriff. "There ain't a chance that he got here more'n a half hour ahead of us. Maybe he's come back for money. A gent that's wandering needs the coin!"

They were nearly at the house when the sound of voices led them around to the garden hedge. The sheriff walked first, lightly, for it was a man's voice that he heard. And when he came in view of the garden he saw Kate Preston in the arms of the man with the scarred face, her blind eyes lifted to him, and such perfect happiness written in her face that the sheriff marveled.

He heard the fugitive say: "I remembered what Buxton said—there's some justice in the world. And I decided to take my medicine. And besides, to have one sight of you, dear, was worth all of the danger."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her voice trembled in such a way that the sheriff's weak heart trembled also.

"But if they take you, Winsor?"

"I intend that they shall. And, besides, I have some debts to pay, some money that's got to be returned to various parties in order to square my account with the world. I've seen the worst that they can do to a man, and I'm not afraid of it. I carry with me the sign of their strength. Put up your hand, dear."

She raised her hand, and he forced the soft finger tips over the ragged scar that ran down his face—until she shuddered and shrank from it.

"It's as though I could feel my own flesh torn! Oh, horrible!" she said. "Why did you make me do it?"

"Because, after all, we must both remember. It is a sign——"

"Of horrible brutality!"

"Of justice, Kate," said he.

And just then the Silver King came to join the happy pair.

THE END.

TWO KINDS OF EAGLES

IN the United States there are only two well-marked eagles, the American white-headed or bald eagle, which ranges over nearly the whole of North America, and the golden eagle, which wanders over every great continent except South America and Australia. In this country it is mainly confined to the region west of the Mississippi Valley.

The American eagle frequents both coasts, but is more common in Florida, the Great Lakes, and in the Northwest, particularly Alaska. Here, because of its greater size, the eagle is distinguished as a special variety, and the Territorial legislature has put a price upon its head. Since this bird is an indigenous American, and the term "white-headed" is cumbersome, and the name "bald eagle" is obviously inappropriate, it seems best to call our national bird by the popular designation, "American eagle."

PIUTE LEADER'S RESTING PLACE

THE tomb of one of the great Northwest Indians, Chief Nampuh, is believed to have been recently located. An ancient Indian grave, which may hold the remains of the famous Piute leader after whom the Idaho city of Nampa was named, was located a short time ago by R. W. Limbert, whose explorations in the region called Craters of the Moon, are accepted by scientific students.

During some recent explorations in the district, Limbert found a flat rock upon which there was carved an arrow. Following the given direction, he located other rocks so marked. The end of the narrow trail was a huge mound of sandstones, with a flat stone resting on top. This was crudely engraved with the figure of an Indian showing very large feet and hands; also a circle, the death sign of the Piute tribes.

The renowned chief, hero of a hundred wars with Western tribes and whites, is reported to have had abnormally large feet and hands. It is a tradition that each foot was six inches wide and eighteen inches long.

Although no excavations have been attempted, the effort of the carver to indicate the large feet and hands leads the explorer to believe this spot marks the tomb of the chief. It is supposed a number of interesting articles of historic value will be uncovered beneath this pile of flat rocks.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Not Talk — Just Pan

By Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "The Guard Invisible," etc.

DURING an adventurous career of over twenty-five years, "Tubby" Willows rarely ever acted without thinking deeply. His partner, "Flapjack" Meehan, as a rule, did the acting for the pair. But for once in his life Tubby was in a mood to act without considering future consequences. He tossed a New York newspaper to the floor and paced the length and breadth of the New Deal Café.

"What's agitating you?" queried Dad Simms, once Cold Deck's official pensioner, but now well fixed, thanks to a lucky strike.

Tubby picked up the paper again. "Read it, Dad!"

The ancient sour dough adjusted a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles and read for several moments: "It says Marcus T. Chadwick is headed this way with a party, and they are wondering whether to wear muklucks and parkas, or pumps and evening clothes. It says something about Eskimos and the land of snow and ice. Ca'm yourself, Tubby; you ought to be used to hearing this country misrepresented."

"For twenty-five years I've been preaching that the coast line of Alaska from Seward south has a milder climate in winter and summer than the New England States, and that in the interior it is no colder in winter nor hotter in summer than the Middle West. Why, near Fairbanks, a hundred horses once wintered out. Seems like my fragrance is wasted on the desert air. By gosh, I'll send Marcus T. Chadwick a message that'll make him think!"

He stalked to his desk and wrote:

MARCUS T. CHADWICK,
New York City.

Bring along your Palm Beach suit, straw hat, light overcoat, dress suit, or tuxedo. Outing clothes for fishing and hunting.

TUBBY WILLOWS,
Cold Deck, Alaska.

"That should hold him!" he exclaimed as he read the message to Dad Simms.

"It sure should! It's hard for some people to believe we can be dudes when we want to. Why, in Dawson, in the early days there were doings sweller than anything the New York four hundred ever pulled; claw-hammer coats, two-gallon hats, and all. Why, when 'Nigger' Tom got spliced, I never saw so many marble-front shirts, low-cut gowns, pearls, diamonds, and furs in my life. And there wasn't a man or woman in the crowd that hadn't shot the White Horse Rapids or couldn't drive a dog team and make a camp when it was forty below. Say, who's this fellow Chadwick, anyway?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Wealthy cuss from New York with fires all over the world and plenty of irons in 'em. He shoots square, and it'd be a great thing if he got interested in Alaska. They call him an empire builder, sometimes. He's so dignified he leans back, and he has never been known to get unduly excited. He can make or lose ten million dollars without batting an eye," said Tubby.

"Seems like I have heard of him. Well, if he ever comes to Cold Deck, he'll find some hard-rock propositions worth looking into."

Dad relapsed into the silence of old age, and Tubby Willows wandered toward the radio station with his message in hand.

About him was the busy activity of a prosperous placer camp. Cold Deck was blessed, as it had ample water supply for its mining operations. Furthermore, in the mountains close at hand were waterfalls waiting to be harnessed, as power for hard-rock development was needed.

Several days elapsed, and then the radio operator handed Flapjack Meehan a message. Flapjack pondered deeply as he made his way to the New Deal Café.

"Tubby, here's something that was wired you. It's addressed to the Cold Deck Chamber of Commerce. It reads: 'Reserve accommodations for party of twenty-five. Remain Cold Deck several days considering mining opportunities. Cable reply. Marcus T. Chadwick.'"

"Good news!" Tubby exclaimed. "We can show him hard-rock propositions till the cows come home!"

"But Cold Deck hasn't a 'Chamber of Commerce,'" Flapjack reminded his partner.

"Then it's time we had one. Every town that amounts to anything has one. It's supported by public-spirited citizens. They peddle hot air about their town, put on claw-hammer coats, and eat big feeds, and it seems to make the towns grow. Why, down in California——" commenced Tubby.

"Never mind California!" Flapjack had once been out-foxed by a native son, and the sun-kist state was a sore spot.

"Every town in Alaska will try and hook Marcus T. Chadwick," began Tubby. "Now I claim Cold Deck is the greatest camp in Alaska. We'll just scare up a Chamber of Commerce and invite Marcus and his crowd to Cold Deck, give 'em a feed, and——" Tubby stopped, a queer expression passing over his face.

Flapjack looked alarm. "What's the matter, sick?"

"Sufferin' Malemutes! I sent word to Marcus T. to bring his claw-hammer coat along. You know what that means? It means the members of the Chamber of Commerce will have to wear tuxedos and dress suits, too. Don't let it get out, or there won't be any members."

"You've raised the deuce," Flapjack growled out. "Huh!"

"Heh! heh!" chuckled Dad, who, as usual, was sitting by the fire. "You'll look fine in claw hammers, you two. Tubby built low to the ground like a tractor, and Flapjack shaped like a string bean."

"You're no beauty yourself with your long hair and scraggly beard," Tubby reminded him. "I suppose we should have a sign on the dock. They have 'em in California!"

Cold Deck, population, 1924, 600; population, 1934, 600,000. Watch us grow!

Flapjack believed that it required something more than sunshine to make a man happy. He vetoed the sign, and came through with a slogan: "Cold Deck. We Say Little and Pan a Lot!"

"Somebody will look wise and ask who we're panning?" suggested Tubby.

"If they do, we'll show 'em some creeks where gold is being panned twenty-four hours a day," came back Flapjack.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was evident that the good citizens of Cold Deck appreciated the need of a civic organization. In response to Flapjack's call, most of the camp was present at the Arctic Brotherhood hall that night. Flapjack was acting chairman.

"Opportunity knocks once at every door," Flapjack announced, "and when old Marcus T. Chadwick knocks here in a few weeks, I'm in favor of letting him in. If this camp is dead a year from now, we can blame ourselves, and if it's the livest camp in Alaska, we can say we did it, because we were on our toes and had the hinges greased when opportunity knocked at the door.

"We need a Chamber of Commerce at fifty dollars a head, and life membership five hundred dollars. Then we'll be ready to give Chadwick a good time. I'm in favor of a banquet of Alaska products from start to finish; moose steak, blueberry pie, bread made from Alaskan wheat, baked in ovens heated by Alaskan coal, Alaskan trout and mountain goat, Alaskan strawberries and spuds, Alaskan—why, I can name enough for three banquets.

"The first thing is to elect officers. We want men with weak minds and strong backs, who'll work hard. The rest of the membership can be intelligent and tell the officers what to do."

"I subscribe for a life membership!" yelled "Rough" Rhodes, "and nominate three weak-minded men for officers: Flapjack, president; Tubby Willows, secretary and treasurer; Dad Simms, vice-president."

A roar of laughter swept through the room, and before Flapjack realized it, the meeting had adjourned, Tubby Willows was struggling beneath a pile of membership fees, and the civic organization was a living entity.

Tubby hired a girl to write letters to each member, and his revenge came when he directed each to purchase a dress suit or tuxedo. Within twenty-four hours a howl went up from the membership, but the officers stood by their guns.

"We're going to do this thing right!" Flapjack announced.

Pete Wold, the tailor, was a game man, but he gave up.

"I can make a few suits on short notice, but I'll have to cable Outside for most of them. They'll rush the order through at Seattle."

Within a week's time the new officers of the Cold Deck Chamber of Commerce had organized a brass band, an orchestra, arranged for uniforms for the volunteer fire department, held a clean-up and a paint-up week, and otherwise followed the lead of modern progressive cities. The partners found that their own personal work was neglected. However, it was so well managed and organized, that their absence did not make very much difference for a month or two.

Cables passed between Marcus T. Chadwick and Flapjack frequently, and almost before they realized it, the great day was at hand.

Arriving on the same boat with Marcus T. Chadwick and his crowd, came several crates and boxes containing evening clothing. Pete Wold spent a feverish day assigning the different suits to their owners, making alterations and putting on a few finishing touches.

The Cold Deck band blared forth music as Chadwick and his party of capitalists stepped ashore. They were conducted down to the New Deal Café, where lunch was served and Flapjack made the welcoming speech. It was a painless speech; it contained a few words and a lot of points.

"There isn't a silver-tongued orator in the camp," he announced, "so Cold Deck will have to speak for itself, and it will talk in hard-rock language."

Marcus T. Chadwick nudged his neighbor and said: "Thank Heaven; I am getting interested in this camp."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Flapjack concluded his speech and announced that a formal banquet would be held that evening in the Arctic Brotherhood hall. And then it was that a bright idea struck Tubby Willows. The moment the lunch was over, he called Flapjack aside.

"Your speech was different," he said excitedly, "and it made a hit. They are interested. Of course the idea that you can go out most anywhere in Alaska and pick up real gold, is pretty well lived down. Now, if we can just fix it up so that Marcus T. Chadwick and his crowd can pan a few nuggets, it will tickle them to death. Old Marcus is dignified, and all that, and he has enough money to buy out a mint, but I'll bet he never panned any gold on his own account."

"It sounds fine," agreed Flapjack, "but if there are any creeks around here where a man can go out and pan gold in a few minutes, there would be a mob there panning gold—a regular stampede."

Tubby waived his objections aside. "What is the matter with salting a bar or two?"

"That won't do," said Flapjack, "because all the creeks around here look as though they have been panned, and one or two have actually got dredges working on them."

"How about Boulder Creek? There hasn't been a shovel stuck in gravel there for fifteen years. You remember when Cold Deck was first started, several men staked claims on Boulder Creek and found nothing, so everybody has let it alone. While you are taking the visitors around to some of the hard-rock propositions this afternoon, I'll sneak up by Boulder Creek and salt three or four of the bars. Then, when the time comes, we can take Marcus T. and his gang out and let them pan a little gold. It won't cost so very much; it won't hurt anybody, and it will give Marcus a mighty good time. In thirty years' time they claim he has never lost his dignity, and if Cold Deck could just get his goat, it would be worth many thousands of dollars in advertising. What do you say?"

Flapjack grinned. "All right; go the limit. The new Chamber of Commerce was organized just to give these people a good time and sell them on the idea of investing their money in Cold Deck, so you can spend every last cent in the treasury, as far as I am concerned."

Tubby Willows appeared at the Cold Deck bank and bought heavily of nuggets. At the Miner's Store he bought pans, picks, shovels, and even a few moosehide pokes. With the practiced eye of a miner, he selected places where bed rock was close and where gold was likely to be found.

Then, rather tired from his day's work, he made his way back to Cold Deck. Flapjack, who was to preside at the first formal banquet ever held in Cold Deck, had already eaten a little to be sure his appetite would be satisfied. The toastmaster of the occasion, he knew his appetite would desert him. He was crawling into a dress suit as Tubby entered. The New Deal Café was almost deserted.

"Where is everybody?" Tubby inquired.

"Getting into their scenery, I guess," said Flapjack. Resplendent in a white shirt and newly pressed trousers, he was then struggling with a collar and bow tie.

"Marcus T. Chadwick has an important announcement to make this evening," said Flapjack. "And just between you and me, I figure the boys are in for a disappointment, but he can't invest his money everywhere in Alaska, and so, naturally, he is picking the place he likes best. We have taken a sporting chance and lost, and if his news to-night is bad news, then we lose with a smile."

Tubby nodded, then burst into laughter, as Dad Simms emerged from a back room.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"My gosh, Dad, what's happened to you? You look like you was a somebody."

"I am somebody," said Dad. "I am one of the leading citizens of Cold Deck and vice president of the Chamber of Commerce. I says to myself: 'For more than seventy years you have never looked like anything, and it is high time you did something about it.' So I went down to the barber shop, had my hair cut, and had the barber point my beard, and when it comes to looking like somebody, Marcus T. Chadwick, himself, hasn't anything on me."

Dad had managed to get some of the ancient kinks out of his bones, and was standing erect. His attire was faultless; certainly he was destined to be the outstanding figure in Cold Deck that night.

Now he strolled about the New Deal Café with a cigar tilted at a rakish angle.

"The only thing I'm kicking about," said the old sour dough, "is the fact that there ain't going to be any ladies there. I'm a slicker, if I do say it myself."

The banquet started with an Alaskan crab cocktail, and from then on, nearly everything except the coffee and the cigars was an Alaskan product. It was an educational dinner, and Marcus T. Chadwick did not hesitate to say so when he made his speech.

"In no town in Alaska," he said, "have we been so royally entertained as we have here. In fact, I might say, that in no town in the States, were we ever so finely entertained, and thus it is with the deepest of regrets that I inform you that it is very doubtful if we will develop any of the attractive propositions offered us at the time. You are men of few words; so are we. We cannot in fairness, to either you or ourselves, partake of your food, shake your hands, and leave you in hopes, when down in our hearts we have decided adversely. That would not be shooting square. It would be easier for us perhaps to break the news later, but we don't do business that way. Neither do you. Other things being equal, Cold Deck would win. In the not-far-distant future, perhaps some of us will invest here. If we do not, certainly others will.

"We carry to our Eastern friends a glorious story of the country and its possibilities, but other things are not equal. Some of us have interests of a small nature elsewhere in Alaska, and naturally, we wish to develop those first. I thank you."

They were good losers, and they liked Chadwick's way, and they applauded his speech. Their keen disappointment was covered with smiles, and the entertainment proceeded as though nothing had happened. Toward the end of the banquet Chadwick's general manager made his talk.

"I must confess," he said with an embarrassed smile, "that while I did not expect to pick up gold in Alaskan creeks, yet I rather hoped to pick up a stray nugget. Perhaps there are creeks where a man might pan a nugget or two, but——"

"There are," interrupted Tubby Willows with a shout. "And whenever you say the word, I'll give every man here a chance to pan real nuggets, or at least see it done."

The manager's eyes twinkled. "Thank you, Mr. Willows," he said. "If it is in order at the present time, I am frank to admit that I would get a kick out of panning a bar, dressed in evening clothes. I do not mean that the bar is dressed in evening clothes; I mean that I am dressed in evening clothes as I pan. I don't care if I find only a nugget as big as a pinhead. I want to go back to New York and say that panning gold in Alaska is a gentleman's sport as well as vocation, that on occasion, men have been known to pan

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bars in evening dress, and that I had done so myself. The others can stand by and watch."

Tubby Willows had not prepared for anything just like this. For a moment he was speechless; then he faced Flapjack.

"Mr. Chairman, I notice that the cigars have been smoked, and some of our guests are getting uneasy. I move that we adjourn to Boulder Creek."

The motion was seconded by each of the twenty-five guests present, and most of the hosts.

Outside, several automobile trucks rumbled up. Most of Cold Deck looked on in amazement, while their leading citizens and guests climbed into the trucks and seated themselves on rough boards. The midnight sun was swinging just above the horizon. Presently it would drop behind the peaks, linger a few moments, and rise again. The twilight would be continuous. It seemed incredible, and yet it was true.

Inwardly Tubby thanked his lucky stars he had salted the bars that afternoon. Gold pans, picks, and shovels were in readiness—more, in fact, than would be needed, for it was apparent that only the manager and a few others cared to experience the novelty of panning gold, thus attired. In fact, it was doubtful if Marcus T. Chadwick approved. He was just a little more dignified than usual. He seemed to be leaning just a little further backward, as he climbed to the driver's seat beside Flapjack Meehan. Overcoats were unnecessary; the air was balmy, and scores of jack rabbits and an occasional ptarmigan were seen in the road ahead. The road ran for perhaps four miles, was narrow, winding, and sometimes rough in spots. Then it ended, and the trucks wound their way through birch and small spruce, passing through by sheer weight in places. Presently they stopped, and the crowd gathered around for instructions.

Tubby Willows stopped at the first bar.

"It's done like this," he explained, and shoveling gravel into the pan he dipped up the right amount of water and commenced the circular movement that comes with long experience. The gravel being lighter, is gradually washed off, leaving the gold, if any, in the bottom. By a little clever work on Tubby's part, the manager commenced digging in just the right spot. He had a lot to learn about handling a pan, but what he lacked in knowledge he made up in enthusiasm. His hands were actually nervous as he poked around among the remaining contents of the pan in search of the nuggets he sought.

"I struck it," he suddenly yelled, and his companions gathered around.

Tubby Willows started a wink, and then he stopped it. There were two nuggets in the pan, and more than a trace of gold dust. Flapjack and Tubby took just one brief glance, and their hearts commenced to pound. To a novice in placer mining, gold looks alike in color and formation, but to the keen eye of the veteran miner, there is considerable difference. The gold that Tubby Willows had quietly placed there was old and worn through the action of time, and the elements, it had been carried a considerable distance from the mother lode, but the other gold in the pan, real gold of Boulder Creek, had not traveled so far, and the stain was different.

"My gosh!" exclaimed Tubby, and then he grabbed an empty pan and shovel. A minute later his shirt front crumpled as he squatted down and commenced to pan the gravel. Water eddied about his dress shoes and soaked his silk socks, but he did not notice it. His eyes were upon the pan. Fifty feet away Dad Simms was digging feverishly. The tails of his claw-hammer coat eddied in the stream just behind him. He was a swift second behind Tubby Willows.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This creek is rich in coarse gold," he shouted. "Or else Tubby Willows did a mighty good job of salting."

Marcus T. Chadwick looked first at his companions, then to the Cold Deck Chamber of Commerce. He was a student of human nature, and he sensed suppressed emotion.

"Salted!" he cried. "What is the meaning of this, Meehan? Are you fellows trying to put something over?"

Tubby Willows held two nuggets aloft. "A confession, gentlemen!" he said. "By way of entertainment, I slipped out and salted this bar and one or two others, so that you could have the thrill of panning placer gold. This creek has been considered worthless, but it seems that the men who prospected it years ago did not know their business."

Three of Cold Deck's leading citizens quietly detached themselves from the group.

"Come back here," barked out Tubby. "We all get an even break on this."

Grinning sheepishly, they returned. Tubby Willows continued:

"There is gold and plenty of it in this gravel, and bed rock is pretty close. Look! In my right hand I hold one of the nuggets I placed here this morning, and in my left hand I hold one of the nuggets that nature placed here. Can you see the difference?"

Marcus T. Chadwick was a capitalist and not a miner, but even he could detect some difference.

"Who owns this creek?" he asked.

"Any man who stakes a claim and beats the other fellow to the recorder's office will own that claim," Tubby exclaimed. "It is a case of first come, first served, and the devil take the hindermost. Help yourselves, gentlemen; one man's chances are just as good as another's."

The first to grasp the situation, aside from members of the Cold Deck Chamber of Commerce, was Marcus T. Chadwick. It was evident that Marcus T. appreciated the value of speed and the necessity of traveling light. The first thing he shed was his dignity, as he broke from the crowd, waded waist deep through the icy stream, and commenced racing up the other side; the going was easier there.

Tubby Willows cupped his hands. "The creek is ten miles long," he yelled. "And there's room for all."

Flapjack and Dad Simms were bringing up the rear, because they were polite. Tubby found himself alone with the manager. "Go to it," he said.

The manager grinned. "This is my claim right here," he replied, and then he proceeded to gather rocks for the first corner monument.

Tubby Willows picked up a shovel and pan and started off. A hundred yards away he found Flapjack Meehan standing on a little knoll with Dad Simms. Tubby joined them. "Come on, Flapjack," he said.

Flapjack shook his head. "I started, but I changed my mind. We have all the money we need, and enough is plenty. I'm going to stand right here and watch the fun. Chadwick is one of the oldest men of the bunch, but the last I saw of him, he was still going strong. In fact, he passed Rough Rhodes. Look at that brush wiggling around over there. There are at least three men in spike-tail coats, each trying to get through first."

"Aha, there's old Marcus again. Those men have been making money all their lives, but this is the first time they have wrested real gold from the bosom of old Mother Nature, and that is the real thrill in money getting."

The midnight sun had looked down upon strange stampedes in Alaska, but none stranger than this. In the early morning hours the clerk in the commissioner's office was routed out of bed to record the first claim. A big man in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evening dress, hair ruffled, hands torn and scratched, clothing more or less in shreds, muddy from the knees down, wet from the knees to the waist, linen shirt front splashed with mud and a wild light in his eyes, headed the line. The pocket in his coat tail sagged, and with nervous fingers he pulled out a fair-sized nugget.

"Found it in the very first pan," he said. "Didn't find a blamed thing in the second pan, but in the third pan I found two little ones. Then I put up my monuments and hurried back. This is a great country. I predict a great future for Cold Deck."

Flapjack Meehan and Tubby Willows cocked alert ears. "Go on," they said.

"It seems amazing that a man can obtain a gold claim by merely locating it, and not digging into his pockets for money, and more money. I can't understand it." He regarded the nuggets affectionately.

"I'm going to stay right here for the next two months," he continued, "and dig gold. After that, I'll organize things a little bit, and then look into some of the hard-rock propositions around here. Personally, I am in favor of developing that part of Alaska where my interests are the greatest. That is right here in Cold Deck."

Other disheveled men in evening attire nodded. Hours ago they had been totally exhausted, and yet they were still carrying on, with no thought of rest or sleep. Virgin gold does strange things to men. It plays no favorites. All feel the magic of its spell. The first man in line having concluded his impromptu speech, pulled forth a very badly soiled handkerchief and mopped the perspiration from his brow. His hands were the color of clay in spots, for he had forgotten to wash them in his eagerness to be first to the recorder's office.

The clerk opened up a large book, dipped a pen in ink, and smiled at the first man in line. "Your name, please?" he queried.

A shred of dignity returned for a moment. "Marcus T. Chadwick," he said in a booming voice.

TALKING TREES

FOREST rangers in the Northwest have made living trees talk. By driving a copper nail into the base of a tree trunk and connecting it to a radio sender, they have started every twig and leaf snapping off waves. Radio messages have been sent by means of trees two or three miles. A ranger may be half a mile from a telephone in an emergency and by simply attaching his portable radio set to a tall tree he secures instantaneous communication.

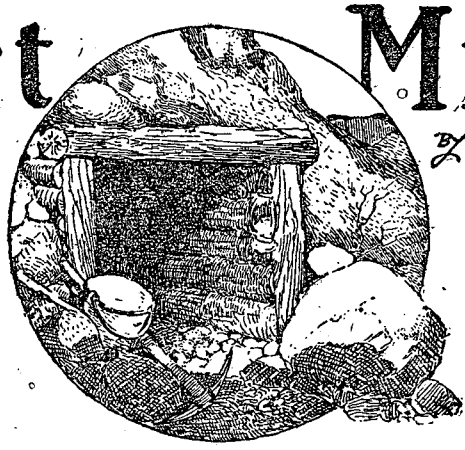
CHOKES WILD CAT

VICTOR DOUGLAS, a miner, a short time ago was driving with a companion in an automobile near Grand Junction, Colorado, when a wild cat crossed the road in front of them and climbed to a ledge on the cliff above the road. Douglas snared the beast with a long stick and some wire.

The enraged cat sprang, but Douglas dodged and was able to keep it from closing in on him by whirling it around him at the end of the wire. Finally Douglas began to grow dizzy and, giving the wire a final swing, hurled it against the cliff and dashed for his car. But the bob cat did not move. The men found it had been chocked to death.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lost Mines



By Roderick O'Hargan

THE ARCTIC COPPER DEPOSITS

TWO hundred and fifty-four years ago—May second, 1670, to be exact—the Hudson's Bay Co.—the governor and company of adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay—received its charter from King Charles the Second, and forthwith got busy adventuring among the Indians and Eskimos of arctic Canada.

Among the earliest trade goods in demand by the natives were knives and needles, the former to replace the soft copper knives in use by the Indians. So much copper was in evidence in the form of ornaments, weapons, and implements that after debating the matter for seventy years, a British parliamentary committee was formed in 1749 to inquire into the prospective mineral wealth of the territory.

Among the witnesses to testify was a Mr. Joseph Robson, who had spent some years in the company's domain. He testified that he had seen natives with chunks of pure copper up to a pound and a half, which they smelted by cooking the ore in a fire until it ran. Alexander Browne, a surgeon in the employ of the company, said that he had seen both copper and copper ore at Prince of Wales Fort on the Churchill River, and which the northern Indians had informed him "grew" on an isthmus of land about four hundred miles distant. He had searched for it and failed to find it.

Doctor Thompson, another of the company's surgeons, informed the committee that he had seen quantities of copper ore brought to Whale Cove—that he had searched for its source for two years, but failed to find it. Christopher Bannister, armorer and gunsmith to the company, told a similar story and showed beautiful shoe buckles his apprentice had fashioned by smelting the ore.

Twenty years later, in 1771, the company sent Samuel Hearn on an expedition to find the copper. He failed, but the trail was getting warm. A certain tribe had become known as the Copper Indians, and a range of mountains as the Copper Mountains.

Fifty years later, in 1821, Sir John Franklin visited the Copper Mountains. He found copper weapons and utensils in common use, but failed to find the deposit.

Before the Canadian senate committee in 1888, sixty years later, Doctor G. M. Dawson, director of the geological survey, admitted that they had nearly traced it, but not quite. Bishop Clut,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Church of England missionary, informed the committee that he had seen large boulders of copper ore on the banks of the Coppermine River, and had found many native crucifixes made of pure copper.

Mr. David T. Hanbury, an Englishman, spent the winter of 1902 with the Eskimos on Bathurst Inlet. He tried to locate these copper deposits, but failed, which was also the experience of Mr. William Beach, in 1911. Both men reported the natives as being in possession of copper implements and utensils.

Lost mine! No, it hasn't been found yet, despite two hundred years of search. It is waiting for some adventurer.

A GIRL IN THE AERIAL SERVICE

MISS HELEN BULLIS, formerly of Omaha, Nebraska, now stationed at Elko, Nevada, is the only girl in the field division of the United States Aërial Mail Service. Three years ago Miss Bullis, who is both young and pretty, decided that teaching at a Chicago institute for the deaf and dumb was no career for her. Accordingly she decided to throw in her lot with the mail men of the sky.

Attired in overalls, she works as any other member of the field staff at Elko, and she admits she is just a little bit envious of the men pilots, for only men are allowed to fly.

"I never fail to get a thrill when I see an airplane come swooping down from the sky and hear its motor humming and throbbing," Miss Bullis said recently. "I think of the glorious adventure it must be to go skimming through the sky, and how fortunate men are to be able to do those things."

Learning daily from the other employees, Miss Bullis hopes eventually to know more about airplanes and their engines than any other girl in the world.

PORCUPINES EAT MUCH TREE BARK

GOVERNMENT foresters are conducting a rather unique experiment out in Flagstaff, Arizona. An attempt is being made to determine the destructive ability of the porcupine. The young "porkies" are being fenced in on the forest areas, with nothing to occupy their attention but the toothsome bark of succulent Western yellow pine seedlings and saplings. From the porcupine's point of view he occupies the position of a small boy at a pie-eating contest.

The porcupine's picnic, however, is of considerable scientific interest to Doctor Taylor and the members of the Southwestern forest experiment station. The fact that one of these animals in six days eats something over twice his own area in tree bark, goes far toward deciding who is to be held responsible for tree girdling in Arizona, where every year many promising young trees are killed in this way.

In one series of experiments one small porcupine gnawed off thirty-four square inches of bark in a single night. Another disposed of one hundred and ninety-six square inches in six days in a forest area about ninety feet square, choosing two large trees and seventeen small ones. A third took three hundred square inches of bark in six days, girdling and killing thirty-nine seedlings, and gnawing thirty-two others, as well as five large pine trees.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Westerners, Whence and Whither?

By Thomas R. Best

WESTERNERS are the "movingest" folks there are, not even excepting the Mongols; the chief difference being that they move singly or in pairs and families, and of their own free will. If you meet a man in Durango, Colorado, it is almost a certainty he was born somewhere else. Mix with a crowd in Pendleton, Oregon, and at least two-thirds are familiar with Hollywood. The others expect to become so next winter. The New Mexico cattleman who plays poker with you on the train, turns out to be an ex-Hoosier.

The folks from Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri are forever selling out and settling in Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota, where they occupy the farms or take the jobs of those that have moved to California or Washington.

Our common relative, Uncle Sam, has compiled some interesting facts and figures concerning our restlessness. He has discovered, for instance, that the first Western State to attract homeseekers, Oregon, the one that of all others should have a steadfast native-born population occupying all the desirable spots, is, at this day, ninety years after the first settlers, the home of several hundred thousand transplanted Americans, who outnumber by far the natives.

Where did they come from? From Maine, 2,446 of them, curious to learn if Portland, Oregon, could possibly be as great a city as that other Portland, or if the Columbia was as broad as the Kennebec. Vermont supplied 1,245; Connecticut, 891. New York sent 13,204, while 12,526 hailed from Pennsylvania, and 29,462 from Illinois. Tiny Delaware is bereft of 129 of her children, and South Carolina lost 323. The call of the forest brought 30,609 from Iowa and 15,303 from treeless Nebraska. The adjoining States contributed largely; 9,513 were born in Idaho, 29,702 crossed over from Washington, and, wonder of wonders, 20,709 native sons left California to live in a greener clime. There were 592 who found Alaska too cold, and 189 found the Philippines too hot. One individual came from Guam.

But Oregonians should not crow overmuch, for more than one hundred thousand of her sons and daughters have found it to their liking to live in other States; their places being filled in some degree of success by an equal number of foreign-born residents.

Picture, if you can, what a mighty

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tumult, what plans and preparations, what buying of tickets, what crowded trains, what slow clanking of covered wagons, is embraced in the fact that 662,451 of those living in the State of Washington were born in the other forty-seven commonwealths, and 265,292 in foreign lands.

Denver is in Colorado, as is well known, but her people come from other States in such numbers that you have only one chance in four of finding a native. Of those at present living in the mile-high city, 281 were born in New Hampshire, 1,434 had departed from New Jersey, 4,110 left Michigan, 13,951 came from Missouri and were shown Pikes Peak as it appears from Cheesman Park, 1,061 came from Alabama, 10,109 left Kansas flat, and 1,881 left New Mexico to live in Denver. One came from far Samoa. In all, 136,658 were born in other States than Colorado.

Consider the difference between Wyoming and Europe. In the latter benighted, tax-ridden, war-scarred region, hard and fast frontiers, bristling fortifications, red-braided officials, laws, differences in tongue and customs, keep folks in one place from generation to generation. To live in Wyoming all one has to do is to hitch up or crank up and go. As a consequence, 2,443 Montanans, 16,445 Nebraskans, 7,075 Kansans, 7,202 Coloradans, 5,410 "Utaws," and 1,737 "Idahoes" have moved to a square State.

But Wyoming is generous, and though having less to give in the way of people, 2,631 of her own have gone to Montana to live, 2,474 to Nebraska, 596 to Kansas, 3,491 to Colorado, 3,322 to Utah, and 3,182 to Idaho. Inspired by the success of a certain well-known "Virginian," 778 from the same State have gone to Wyoming in the hope of getting themselves pretty school-teachers —and they are quite willing to shoot a Tampas or two to do it!

Five million people born east of the Mississippi River are now living west of it. One million people born west of the Mississippi have moved east of it, doubtless to occupy private offices in the New York skyscrapers.

Even so young a State as New Mexico, which has a larger proportion of stay-at-homes than any other in the West, has sent some of her sons and daughters to every other State. Twenty-nine have gone as far as they could, and are living in Maine; 16,212 went only a little way and settled in Colorado; 917 fill those big New York jobs, and 151 in West Virginia sometimes wish they were back on the Rio Grande.

And Kansas, where are not thy children? They are scattered as far as the winds blow—600,000 of them to the islands of the sea and the uttermost mountain vales. Not a city but knows them by scores, hundreds, or thousands. Not a Western county but has heard at first hand tales of John Brown, of grasshoppers, and of eight-foot corn.

Without calling them into court to explain their desertion of their native State, it is a sad duty to state that 102,928 have moved to Oklahoma, that 83,712 went to Missouri, nearly half of whom merely crossed the State line into Kansas City. As many as 13,282 journeyed to Idaho, while only 82 were caught living in Delaware. California is proud of 62,885 of them, and 1,805 sojourn in the District of Columbia. Colorado harbors 55,045. In all the five adjoining States there are 300,000 Kansans.

Indians? There are still Indians in the West, and they are the only class that live where they were born. Our Uncle found about 250,000 of them in his domain, more than a fifth of whom live in Oklahoma. Arizona has 32,989; New Mexico, 19,512; California, 17,360; South Dakota, 16,384; Idaho, 3,098; and Wyoming only 1,343.

Other prominent Westerners are

W9 WB

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chinese—not prominent to tourists perhaps outside of San Francisco's Chinatown, but well known to residents. Montana has only 872 of them, but they are scattered by ones and twos throughout the State; 1,137 are in Arizona, 585 in Idaho, and about 28,812 in California.

Then there are hundreds of thousands of good Westerners who were not born in any of the forty-eight States. There is not a country or race but has some representative in every part of the great West. Of the foreign born, Norway leads in North and South Dakota, and is close to the top in Montana and Washington. Sweden leads in Idaho, and is close behind Norway in the other States. Germans are most numerous in Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma; Canadians in Montana, Washington, and Oregon. English are most plentiful in Utah and Wyoming, but not in Colorado, as some suppose, for Russians, Italians, Germans, Mexicans, and Swedes each outnumber them there. Italians are first in Nevada and divide honors in California with Mexicans. The latter lead the procession in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

No blow at Arizona's reputation as the chief home of "strong, silent men," is intended, but to be truthful, it is necessary to record the fact that in this great State are many who in their early days never heard of the Grand Cañon, never saw a cattle brand, never drank of the Hassa Yanpa, and who, if they ever heard of the Southern Pacific at all, thought it was somewhere around the Fiji Islands. Here is a partial list of these once-benighted but now happy beings: 2,883 were born in England, 595 in Scotland, 192 in Wales, 1,206 in Ireland, 1,494 in Scandinavian lands, 69 in Holland, 22 in Luxemburg, 293 in Switzerland, 148 in Czecho-Slavakia, 210 in Hungary, 16 in Lithuania, 407 in Finland, 28 in Bulgaria, 6 in Albania; 1,013 in Spain, 8 in Armenia, 8 in Palestine, 27 in India, 1,964 in Canada, 23 in Africa, 222 in Australia, and 61,580 in Mexico. All the world has contributed to Arizona. In her great days to come may she contribute to all the world.

Another astounding fact that Uncle Sam has learned is this: In Wyoming there are 125 men for every 100 women; in Nevada 115 to 100; and in Washington the ratio is 117 to 100, while in Utah there are only 97 men to 100 women.

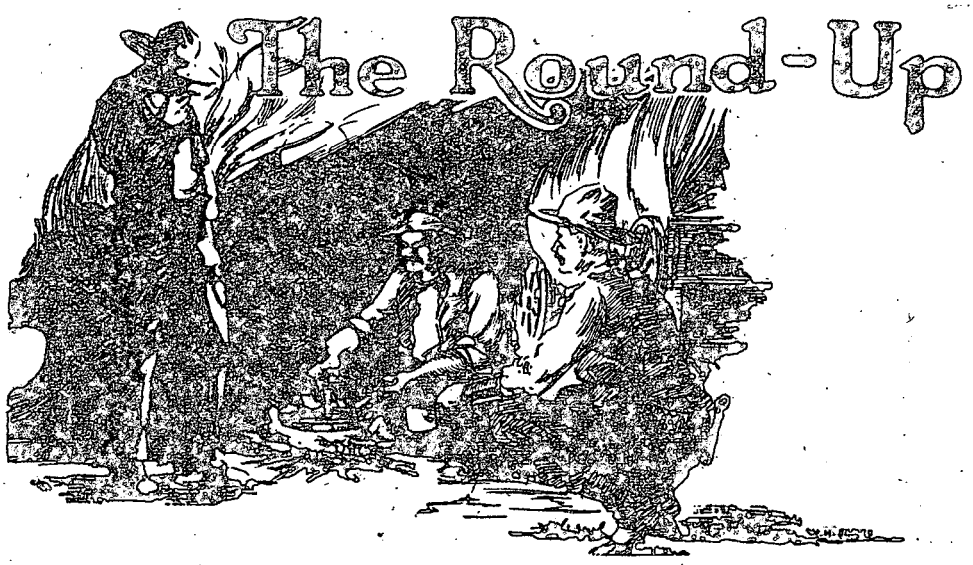
In Nevada there are seven thousand unmarried men of the magical ages of twenty-one to thirty-five, and only one thousand girls of those romantic years of eighteen to twenty-four. In Arizona there are twenty-five thousand young men of like age and condition, all of whom must fight one another for the hands and fortunes of the five thousand maidens.

COYOTE ATTACKS FARMER

HAMON CHABARIA, a farm laborer of Brawley, California, recently received the surprise of his life when a coyote made a savage attack upon him. He had been told that coyotes never attack human beings. He tossed his cap at the animal to frighten it, but without effect. Then he had scarcely time to seize a shovel and kill the enraged brute, as it leaped at him with gleaming teeth.

Old-time residents of the desert country assert that they have never heard of a coyote attacking a man. It was the general belief of the neighborhood that the animal was suffering from rabies. Accordingly its head was cut off and sent to chemists for examination.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IT'S easy to see that J. Lucas, of Cleveland, Ohio—him that's sittin' over there beyond the fire—has got a question to ask, for he's holdin' up his right hand as high as he can reach, and has a most inquirin' look on his face.

"What'll yer have, Brother Lucas?"

"If you will kindly tell me and some of my friends what a 'grulla' horse is, we'll be most obliged to you. In George Gilbert's story, 'Meet the Boys from O Bar O,' there is a 'grulla' horse."

Now, if that isn't fortunate, for there is Gilbert over there, leanin' against the off hind wheel of the chuck wagon. You do it, George—tell 'em what a grulla horse is!

"Sure, I'll tell 'em, boss. In Spanish, 'grulla' means a crane, that is, the bird known as the crane. The word is pronounced as if spelled 'gruya.' Referring to a horse, the word refers to the color. The crane, seen at a distance, is of an indefinite, smoky gray or blue-gray. A grulla hoss is a blue-gray or smoke-gray, more properly one that is of that quiet, neutral color that blends well with outland backgrounds. A man 'on the dodge' or a man-hunter is apt to want such a horse, as such a horse, if well-gaited and enduring, is peculiarly suited to traveling unseen or with the minimum of risk from being seen. The showy paint horse, or cream or light buckskin, or showy dappled horse, is easily seen. He shows well in a movie, but makes a darned fine target for the eye, unaided, backed by glasses, or for a bullet. Hence I'm apt to make a lot of use of the smoke hoss in my stories, because I give my heroes and villains credit for being some long on savvy, or they wouldn't be worth writing about.

"Alazan is a word I've used, too. It means sorrel. Sometimes it's alazana."

"Dear Boss," writes Miss Herma G. Knisley, Columbia City, Indiana, "I just can't keep still any longer, so here goes. I saw where you asked if girls liked to read the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE. Well, sir, here's one who does, and I always recommend it to my friends. I have been very much interested in the discussion on horses. I am a great lover of horses, and have a little bay saddle mare I sure think the world of. When I got her last spring, she was certainly mean and stubborn, and it was all caused by some one being mean to her. I soon tamed her and I didn't use a Spanish bit or spurs. Now she follows me around like an affectionate dog.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I am inclosing a check for three dollars. My dad gave it to me for a six months' subscription to the good old WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE."

We certainly thank you for recommending WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE to your friends and for the subscription. We hope that your friends are never disappointed, and that WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE coming for six months will prove to be the best buy you ever made. Your speaking of recommending WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE to your friends reminds us of a dream we had not long ago. We dreamed that every reader of the W. S. M. asked a friend to buy the next issue of the magazine, and that every friend so asked *did* buy a copy of the next issue. Well, the next morning when we got to our office, the circulation manager was in there, jumpin' up and down, and wantin' to know what we'd gone and done to boost the circulation of WESTERN STORY to just double what it had been the week before. He sure was one happy man, and so were we—till we woke up. Still, dreams *sometimes* come true, partly, at any rate, don't they?

We will now read some letters:

"DEAR BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP AND FOLKS: I can't stand it another moment. I seldom write to a magazine and express my appreciation. I think the other fellow will do that, and go on reading and enjoying myself, but doggone, I've got some things bothering and picking at me, and I'm going to say my say. I like all the authors, and like to see them praised; but why leave out one of your best, honest-to-goodness authors, Harley P. Lathrop? I'll just leave it to the rest of the readers. How do they get that way? Why don't they wake up and give a little praise to Lathrop. As critical as I am, I can't see anything absurd or foolish or objectionable about the stories Lathrop rattles off. I like 'em, and I want to see more. I've bought old W. S. M. every week for over five years now, and have had fights galore over it, even though I am a girl. I've upheld it, I've scolded it, I've made people read it—well, I guess in these five years I've done everything do-able with old WESTERN STORY. I like it.

"Now about the other authors—but they get so much praise, as it is, I'm not going to say much—I like Max Brand, Robert J. Horton, George Owen Baxter, and Robert Ormond Case. I sure like those 'Lonesome' stories. I'm so anxious to see Lonesome marry the schoolmarm. Say, doesn't Lathrop know horses! He writes as though he knew what he was talking about.

"Do I detest Spanish Bit? I'll say I do. Where does she get that stuff, anyway? I don't believe she can be a woman at all. She isn't feminine, anyway; she can't be.

"Well, I wouldn't mind hearing from people at all. I'm twenty-two, born on a cattle ranch in good old Colorado, traveled a bit, enjoying myself here in Hawaii, love the place in fact, been here almost two years now, second trip here, am working for the government, pretty good job. Can swim, and ride the surf a bit, et cetera. V. EDWARDS.

"Honolulu, Hawaii."

"DEAR ROUND-UP BOSS AND FOLKS: For several years I have been one of the interested readers of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and Where to Go and How to Get There, The Round-up, and The Hollow Tree. They don't beat them. They all look good to me. I trust you will overlook my poor attempt as a writer. Where I was raised they had no schools or books—Wyoming in 1886, riding wild horses for a living. How well I still remember I had to stay on top to stay on the pay roll, and as I was well known in those days, I am hoping some of my old friends will

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

learn my present address and write me for old time's sake.

"In conclusion I will say, should any one wish for any information concerning southern California, which has been my home for the past fifteen years, I will be pleased to answer them.

"With best wishes for George Gilbert, George Owen Baxter, Courtney Ryley Cooper, 'Peg-leg' Garfield, and 'Flapjack' Meehan. Most respectfully,

"W. E. PALMER.

"Montrose, California."

"Dear Boss and Round-uppers," writes Ira Swindall, Jr., of Gatesville, Texas, "I am in need of some information: How many kinds of poisonous snakes are there in the United States? What are they? Is the sidewinder different from the ordinary rattlesnake, and if so, how? A friend, who claims to know, says there are only three different kinds of poisonous snakes in the United States: rattlesnake, copperhead, and cottonmouth moccasin. I also want to know if spreading adder is the real name for the snake that is usually called by that name?"

Look at the next page, Ira, and all others who are interested, and read what our old friend, Rattlesnake Pete, says on the subject—*he knows!*

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

BUCK FARGO'S TRICK

By JOSEPH B. AMES

The shortest way is often the quickest way out of a difficulty. Buck goes right to the center of things and clears them up.

BEYOND THE OUTPOSTS

By PETER HENRY MORLAND

A story of the Western plains—with Indian massacres and plenty of red adventure—this yarn is comprised of all the thrilling episodes that were everyday occurrences in the early '60s.

A Fool and His Matches

By EDWARD T. GLYNN

Retribution in the Northland is a grim and terrible thing. He who laughs in the face of it is not a bravado but a fool.

OTHER GOOD STORIES BE SURE TO ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE

"I wouldn't be without my blue and gold badge for anything. I'm sure if folks knew what a fine gang ours is they'd all join," writes Verle Scovell of East Alton, Illinois.

Twenty-five cents in stamps or coin sent to the Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York, will bring you either the button style for the coat lapel, or the pin. In ordering be sure to state which you wish.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poisonous Snakes

By Rattlesnake Pete

I BEEN taking in all these discussions about horses an' guns an' the like, even if I ain't said nothing. Truth is, I been content to keep quiet an' listen an' learn. But when it comes to the subject of snakes, well, that's another matter. Then it's up to old Rattlesnake Pete, especially the Boss having called on him, to put in a word.

The party what told you there's only three kinds of poisonous snakes in this United States, Brother Swindell, was plumb mistaken, just like you thought; there's four of 'em. There's the water moccasin, or cottonmouth snake, as it is sometimes called, owing to its mouth being white inside; the coral snake; the copperhead; and the rattlesnake.

To show you old Rattlesnake Pete ain't talking through his sombrero, and so's you'll recognize these here poisonous reptiles in case you meet up with any of 'em—which I hope for your sake you won't—I'm going to tell you a little about 'em."

First take the water moccasin, found in the Carolinas and in your part of the country, the Gulf States. He's a pretty formidable old fellow to meet up with, one of the largest of the poisonous snakes in this country, in fact. You find 'em as long as five feet. This snake's a sort of dull olive or brown on top; on the sides he's a little paler in color and has faint blackish bands. His head, which is fairly chunky, is 'most always black; his abdomen is yellow with dark-brown or black blotches. He's a reptile that dearly loves the swamps.

The coral or harlequin snake, now, is a pretty little fellow, only about fourteen inches long when full grown. You'll find him anywhere from central North Carolina through Florida and west to the Mississippi River. One species even ranges as far west as New Mexico and Arizona. As you can guess by his name, wide scarlet rings completely circle the coral snake's body. He has some yellow and black rings, too, smaller in size than the coral ones.

Now the copperhead, he's a moderate-sized snake; ain't likely to see one over three feet long. His color is hazel brown with big cross bands of rich chestnut. He's pinkish white beneath with a row of large dark spots on each side of his abdomen. His head, paler in color than his body, often has a coppery tinge, and that's how he came by his name. He's found eastward from Indiana to the Atlantic coast well up into New England, southwest to Texas, and westward to the Rio Grande.

As for rattlesnakes, these reptiles are different from other snakes owing to having a number of horny joints at the end of their tails which they rattle when excited, the same serving to warn folks of their danger. Old diamondback is the largest of all our rattlers. This serpent grows from six to eight feet long, has a stout, heavy body, and his broad, flat head is quite distinct from his neck. He gets his name from a chain of large diamond markings on his back with broad yellow borders about as wide as a scale. His ground color is olive or grayish green; his tail is olive on top, ringed with black; his abdomen dull yellow. His range is pretty much the same as that of the coral snake. In the southern part of the United States,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say from Texas to California, we have a first cousin of his, the Western diamond rattlesnake. In fact, partner, all the poisonous serpents in the West, except the coral snake, are rattlers. On the prairie there's the prairie rattler; in California there's the red rattler; in California, Oregon, Washingon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona there's the Pacific rattler; in California, Nevada, and Colorado we have the tiger rattler; in southeastern California and Arizona, the bleached rattler; in Arizona there's Willard's and Price's rattlers; and in Texas and across New Mexico to Arizona there's Green's.

Then there's the sidewinder. Brother Swindell wants to know whether the sidewinder is different from other rattlesnakes. He sure is different, brother, in several ways. He has another name; he's called the horned rattlesnake, too, because he has a hornlike growth over each eye. I guess you know why he's called a sidewinder? Well, if this reptile had to crawl across the desert sands it would take him a powerful long time to get anywhere. But he don't crawl, brother. No, sir. He does the next thing to walking, having no real, honest-to-goodness feet like you and me. He throws his body along in a series of loops, one after another, and he shore can travel when he gets started. You'll see the sidewinder or horned rattler—whichever you want to call him—in desert regions of Arizona, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, and eastern California. He's pale brown, yellow, or pinkish, with a series of dull blotches on him, usually separated by white spaces. You seldom see one over thirty inches long.

As for spreading adder being the right name for the snake so called, it's right as far as it goes, brother. You see, that snake has a bad reputation and uses a heap of aliases. Sometimes he goes by the name of spreading adder. Other times he's known as hog-nosed snake. He's also called puff adder, flat-headed adder, blow snake, and sand viper. The reason for all those names is this: This snake, like a lot of people we know, is a big bluffer. When somebody comes around and he gets scared he'll take a long breath and flatten his head and neck, so that his neck becomes about three times its regular width. He thinks by making himself look so terrible he'll frighten folks away, and he's a plumb fierce-looking object to behold. But you can call his bluff easy enough. Why, if you put your hand close up to him he won't even bite you. If he can't frighten you away he'll pretend to be dead. He's a pretty good actor, too. Most anybody, to see you carrying him limp as a string around on a stick, would swear he was a dead snake. But he ain't; he's only bluffing.

Now, having said his say to the best of his ability, Rattlesnake Pete'll say adios to the Boss, Brother Swindell, and all the other Round-up folks, take his old place in the shadow of the camp fire, and listen in again.

LARGE COUGAR IS KILLED

A MOUNTAIN cougar, measuring six feet and four inches from tip to tip, was shot a short time ago by Jim Brady in a barn on the farm of Mrs. Dora Rayburn at Emigrant Springs, eight miles west of Wasco, Oregon. The cougar appeared to be exhausted from lack of food. It crawled into some straw and went to sleep. Mr. Brady obtained a shotgun and fired while fourteen feet away from the cougar. The animal's body was later exhibited in Wasco.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

WHEN you have written a letter to The Tree, folks, take a last look to be sure you have signed your name and given your address. Sometimes a Gangster hastily or absent-mindedly omits one or both of these important items and then wonders why he does not get an answer to his letter. Sometimes, too, letters come in bearing as signature a pseudonym but giving no name and address; other letters give a real address but a fictitious name. Try to give a permanent address if possible, Gangsters; many of you know the discouraging result of General Delivery addresses.

Remember Buck, the cow-waddy who told us something a while back about the hardships of a cow-puncher's life? Well, here's another puncher who doesn't entirely agree with him, and who has something to say on his own account on that subject, always an interesting one to us.

DEAR MISS RIVERS, GANG, AND COWBOY ASPIRANTS: In the August 23d number of the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE I noticed a letter signed Buck in which he says that it takes from childhood to become a cow-puncher, and then sometimes one does not make good.

Just what age Buck considers childhood I do not know, but if he means what I think he does, then he is radically wrong, as is the assertion I have heard time after time, that the ability to ride a bucking horse has to be born in you. Men learn a trade by apprenticeship. Some do not become as skilled workmen as others, nevertheless they know their trade.

I know men born and raised on a ranch who cannot ride a bucking horse nor break a colt properly, neither can they work cattle right. On the other hand, I have met men born and raised in cities who came West and developed into good all-around hands in time, and they learned it by taking the knocks and sticking. I am acquainted with numerous contest men, several of whom are in Class A, and when it comes to breaking colts or working cattle properly they are not there and will tell you so should you ask them. To be a good cow hand or a good horse breaker you do not have to be a first-class rider, by that I mean of the class that participate in rodeos.

Buck's statement that inexperienced men going to work on a ranch will get the thrills of digging post holes, stretching barbed wire, et cetera, is very true—that is where the apprenticeship comes in. But, boys, they are not like firewood; you don't dig them and pile them up to be used in the future. When he says that you work from daylight until dark he is wrong. Yes, you work more than eight hours, but there is quite a difference in who you are working for; the majority of ranchers only ask you to do a fair day's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

work. Of course if a man is riding or with a wagon he has to expect to put in long hours. If you are driving a bunch of stock you cannot expect to drop them in order to be able to make the ranch or wagon in time for meals or in order to put in just an eight-hour day.

You get a salary of fifty or sixty dollars a month, as Buck says, with your board and room, and as a general rule if a man works on a ranch steadily and is clean physically his clothes will be washed, and if he has a saddle horse it is fed free of charge. What kind of a position do you have to have in a city where you can live as well as they do on most ranches?

Traveling with a wagon on a round-up you do roll out early and sometimes you can shake a little snow off your tarpaulin, and in cold weather there is generally quite a bit of choice cursing about this time.

What did Mr. Buck say about changing horse five or six times a day? I wonder where that country is located where he punched cows? I do not suppose he would consider making less than a two or three-hundred-mile circle in a day. All the cow pokes I ever heard of were more than pleased when riding circle if they could change mounts once a day, and if they were lucky sometimes to grab a biscuit and a piece of sawmill turkey some time between breakfast and supper.

Here, so Buck says, are the thrills of cow-punching in rainy weather: wet clothes, wet feet, nothing dry to put on, and you roll in a wet bed with even your boots on. If I remember properly a cow-puncher has what is known as a war bag with a couple of changes in it sticking around the wagon somewhere, then usually there is material around, some of which is dry enough to start a fire with. A wet bed, ugh! How come, Buck? I thought the beds generally traveled with the wagon, also had an idea that a man could find a halfway sheltered spot under which to unroll a bed part of the time, whether he is traveling with a pack outfit or a wagon.

That certainly must be a terrible country Buck lives in with snow and rain most all of the time on the fall round-up, hard work, lots of nights without sleep. I thought the boys took turns about standing guard when it was necessary. Wild cattle, boy, awful wild if a couple of men can't ride herd on them and hold them.

Buck says when the fall round-up is completed you begin to round up the cattle in the mountains and start them for the feed yards in the winter. The snow is so deep by this time that many of said cattle are snowed in. I have ridden the mountains in fairly deep snow after cattle that were missed and were late coming down or were a little wild and were caught in the snow pretty high up, but usually when the snow starts to fly those cattle that have not been gathered or already started down themselves will do so. Any stockman or hand will tell you that in the fall or winter when it starts to snow a horse will start working up while a cow starts down. I have broken trail for horses that were snowed in, but never for cattle, although I suppose it has been done lots of times; know it does not happen frequently, though.

As for trying to discourage a tenderfoot, Buck, I came out West as one of that same class of people. I left my home town, the city of Chicago, where you will have to admit there is not much range riding done, and came out West to become a cowboy in 1911. I was fifteen years old, and knew a horse when I saw one, but had never handled one until I came West. Not long after I left home I was working as a roustabout wrangler, et cetera, for Charles Howell, Charles Hyles, and Sandy Hemp on the Green River in Wyoming on the edge of the red desert at what was known as the Frenchman's, which was a dilapidated bunch of old ranch buildings and corrals about forty miles up the river from Green River City, Wyoming. They were running wild horses on the red desert. After breaking camp there we moved to Charles Howell's ranch, about fifteen miles up the river, to which place they moved the horses.

Several of the wild horses which were being broke to lead were running around the corrals back of the house with hacks on dangling ropes. When they were all in the house I would pick up one of these ropes, snub Mr. Horse up to the fence and jump on, then turn him loose. Sometimes I rode one around the corral a little while and jumped or fell off; most of the time I didn't stay on very long, getting off without any exertion on my part. But I had started out to learn and was going to, no matter what the consequences.

I reached the State of Wyoming in 1911, and in 1914 I could ride a hard bucking horse straight up. I could also break a colt properly, knew quite a bit about punching cows, and could catch what an ordinary rider could with a rope. How many times I got bucked off during those three years I would not care to count, got hurt a few times, got whipped over the wrists, hands, and arms numerous times with a quirt or rope, to make

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me quit pulling leather, and threw a rope practicing until my arm would play out.

I met the family of that old-timer, Bruce Haynes, who had a letter in the August 23d issue, in Hudson, Wyoming. His brothers, Mack and Wallace, will hold me out in my statement about riding bucking horses, breaking colts, et cetera, at that time. Other Hudson folks, Lloyd McDowell, Pierce Ricketts, or Ned Vaughn, will also bear out my statements.

Tenderfoot, should you come out West, never say quit; bring what they commonly call guts with you and use them. If they buck you crawl right back on, and if the boys job you stay right with 'em, and you will succeed.

So far I have ridden in a few contests, and while I am not what the boys call real forked I can get by.

Most boys when they leave home have a foolish notion about changing their names. I was one of those, and the name I chose, the one by which the people in Wyoming will know me, is Jack McCauley. Growing older and realizing my early foolishness, I have taken my right name again, which is

E. A. FALLON.

Care of Eugene A. Bond, 15-16 Bank Annex Building, Leadville, Colo.

A sister who would like to hear from those interested in traveling, says:

I have just returned from a trip to the Grand Cañon of Arizona. At first glimpse from the edge of the abyss the cañon seems a primeval void hemmed in everywhere, except skyward, by the solid framework of our earth—rocks, rocks, and yet more rocks, millions of years old. Miles below the rim a tiny stream is seen—the Colorado River. From the rim it appears to move very slowly, but you find when you reach the cañon that it is a regular torrent. The various trips down into the cañon are made on mules. You traverse a very narrow zigzag trail until you reach the river where you have lunch before beginning the return trip back up the trail.

PAULINE ANDERSON.

609 North Oregon Street, El Paso, Texas.

Raymond E. Phillippi, R. F. D. 2, Box 1064C, Inglewood, California, wants correspondents from any part of the world. He will give information about the southern part of his State to all who wish it.

Hello Girl, care of The Tree, is planning a Western trip this summer and is looking for a girl companion. Even if you aren't interested in the trip she'd like to hear from you; she can handle two hundred letters, she says.

"I expect to spend the winter with my parents at a small ranch high up in the Colorado Rockies where winter sport abounds, and would like to find a clean young man who would be willing to contribute a small amount for his maintenance to stay with us." This offer comes from "Colorado." Send letters to him in my care, brothers.

Are you interested in the Canadian West? Then Maple, care of The Tree, wants to hear from you.

A fourteen-year-old sister, Ella Elmer, R. 2, Box 42, Newport, Washington, says: "I live on a one-thousand-acre farm. Timothy hay is the principal crop. Besides farming we keep from sixty to a hundred cattle and a few horses. Will some lonely girl like me please write?"

Walter Golba, 22 Gardner Street, Chicopee, Massachusetts, wants correspondents who work in lumber camps, especially in the States of California, Oregon and Washington.

Mrs. Burrell L. Routh, Box 381, Huntington Beach, California, asks for letters from married sisters her age, twenty-two. She's especially interested to hear from those who have children; she has two little girls.

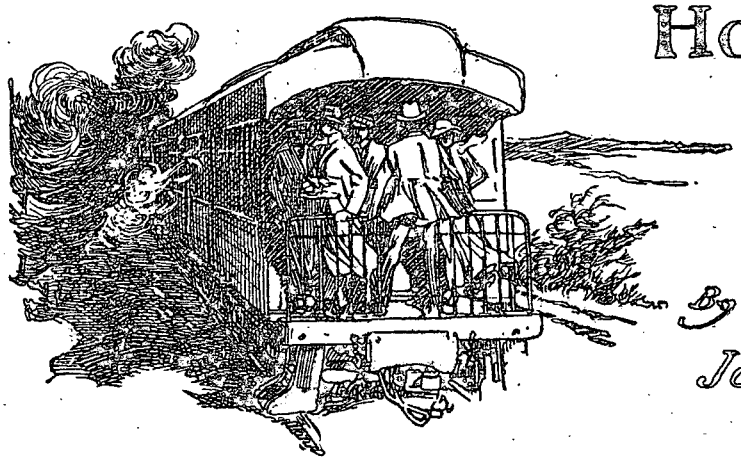
"I can tell The Gang some interesting stories of travel in the great Southwest," offers A. E. Kistner, 5643 Glenview Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Letters, letters, and more letters are wanted by Betty Gay-Mosco, 924 Main Street Walsenburg, Colorado. Be sure to answer 'em all now, Betty.

Has any one any information to impart about coffee growing in the tropics? If so, Ralph Anders, 5609 Quimby Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, would like to hear from you. Ralph has covered most of the old globe and offers to share his experience with those who think they may profit by them.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where To Go and How To Get There



By John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

CRATERS ON THE MOON

IT must not be deduced from the caption of this article that I am abandoning my usual field and taking up astronomy, or that I have discovered some means of communicating with other planets. The Craters of the Moon is the name of our latest national monument, a lava wonderland situated in Idaho, about twelve miles southwest of Arco, on the Idaho Central Highway. This road serves to connect Boise and points west with Yellowstone National Park.

As may be inferred, the name, Craters of the Moon, is given to this region of strange lava-flow formations because of the resemblance that these bear to the face of the moon as viewed through the telescope. The surface of the monument, comprising an area of some thirty-nine square miles, seen from the eminence of Big Cinder Cone, is a barren, rugged, black wasteland, thickly scarred with pits and craters. It is an impressive and awe-inspiring spectacle, this great, tumbled mass of lava fields, studded with cinder cones, rent by huge earth fissures, and strewn with twisted, oddly molded lava formations. For the student of geology, it is an inspiring and highly instructive place for investigation and research.

The lava flow contains several caves and tunnels which give the region an added atmosphere of grimness and mystery. In some of the tunnels, water, snow, and ice are to be found; in fact, the ice and snow forming in them during the winter never entirely melt in summer. Then, too, there are the ever-fascinating stalagmites and stalactites to be seen in the caves. For the most part, it is a land of desolation, devoid of animal and vegetable life. Wild flowers grow on the slopes of some of the great cones of cinder, giving a picturesque touch of color to these black hillsides, and there are a few chipmunks, ground squirrels, and small desert birds, but apart from these the region is inhos-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pitable, even snakes being practically unknown there.

There are many places throughout the West where the land is covered with these strange lava-flow formations, so that the occurrence is not unusual. However, it has been deemed advisable to reserve this particular tract of lava-bed country as a national monument, for the benefit of the thousands who travel to the West every year to view its wonders.

This is the first national monument reservation to be set aside in the State of Idaho, and it is the thirtieth tract to be thus designated as devoted to public recreational purposes in perpetuity.

Now for a look at that mail bag of mine!

TO WORK IN TEXAS

DEAR MR. NORTH: I want to get work in some small town in Texas. I am a young man of twenty and would be willing to take what I can get. Please let me know what you can do for me. L. LOUDEN.

Minneapolis, Minn.

This job-hunting proposition is beyond me. I can't get jobs for my correspondents, much as I would like to. Just make up your mind which part of Texas you want to go to, and go. Then look for your job just as you would in Minneapolis or anywhere else. Read newspaper ads, go and apply personally at shops, factories, farms, stores, and other places where people are constantly being hired. The large cities, such as Fort Worth, Galveston, Dallas, and others, will have employment agencies which may help you. Good luck to you!

TIN-CAN TOURING

DEAR MR. NORTH: I want to see as much of the West as possible next summer, but my means are limited and I shall probably have to work part of the time on the way. Will you please tell me the best method of going about this—how to travel, get employment when necessary, and such things?

R. S.

Binghamton, N. Y.

The most economical way to "do" the West nowadays is to join the vast army of "tin-can tourists," who are journeying over our highways in their cars of various makes and different degrees of dilapidation. If you don't know how to take care of a car, learn this winter, save as much as you can, and buy a second-hand auto for your trip. There are auto-trail maps which you can get at almost any news stand or bookseller's. These will give you particulars of the best routes to follow. Boy Scout and similar handbooks will give you tips on camping out. As regards employment, be willing to take any job that you can get. Don't be fussy. Carry along enough capital to guard against disaster. There are thousands seeing the West in this way every summer—National Parks and all the other natural wonders—at very slight expense. Traveling to the West is no longer a rich man's luxury. It's for the poor man, too, and I rather think he gets more of a thrill out of achieving his ambition to visit his land of dreams than his more prosperous brother.

THE OZARKS AGAIN

DEAR MR. NORTH: I have lived in the Ozarks for twenty years. My father has a large farm in the heart of the Ozarks, on the State highway, or Ozark Trail. My grandfather and father helped to settle that part of the country, and they know every hidden crevice, nook, and trail. I have traveled over a number of States, and there is none of nature's wonders that I have seen to equal my Ozark Mountains. Your correspondent, Mr. Henry Allen, was absolutely right when he said that Springfield, Missouri, is the beginning or gateway of the Ozark Mountain country and the Frisco is the way. Any one wanting information about this region please address me in care of this magazine. I shall be glad to answer any inquiries.

ONE WHO KNOWS.

This is a kind offer, which will probably interest a lot of readers. Send a stamped envelope for reply, of course. Address One Who Knows, in my care.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ABOUT HORSES

DEAR MR. NORTH: Did the white men bring horses to America, or were the Indians using horses before the coming of the Europeans? There is a wager on this. JOHN P.
Gettysburg, Pa.

The Spaniards first introduced horses among the Aztecs and later to the Pueblo Indians. The horse was unknown to the Indians prior to the coming of the white men.

MORE DATA ON OUR INDIAN POPULATION

F. W. HODGE, of the Museum of the American Indian in New York, recently took exception to certain statements on the present and past population of our Indian tribes, which had been based on an announcement of the secretary of the interior. Mr. Hodge, who is an authority on things Indian, says the Indian Office announced there were now 346,962 Indians in the United States who are maintaining tribal relations, and some sixty thousand who have severed their tribal connections and are scattered among the general population.

An editorial in the New York *Times* stated that it was doubtful if our country in the old days could have supported more Indians, and that it was just as doubtful if "they ever were any more numerous than now." We were inclined to accept this view, and now comes Mr. Hodge, with convincing new data, to show that both of the above deductions are untenable.

"If we exclude some of our Southwestern tribes, like the Navajos, the Apaches, and the Pueblos, which aggregate fifty-six thousand, said to be of full blood, it is exceedingly doubtful," he says, "whether ten per cent of the remaining 290,000 are full Indians. It is a well-known fact that any individual on the roll is an Indian, whether he have as little as a thirty-second or a sixty-fourth Indian blood.

"The statement that our territory could support no more Indians than at present can hardly stand the light. One must neglect even his school history to assert that the great Atlantic seaboard from Maine to California, with its pitiful little remnant of Indians, fairly represents the aboriginal population of early days, when every mile was either occupied by Indians or used as hunting grounds. And one may say the same of California, with its native population of between two hundred and two hundred and fifty thousand before the beginning of the mission period in the eighteenth century, now reduced to 13,335, including all shades of admixture.

"To say that the Indian population has not suffered seriously from removal from one part of the country to another, with attendant starvation, from dissipation through intoxicants introduced by whites; from wars, with accompanying massacres, which time and again were forced on the Indians because they dared call their souls their own; from epidemics of smallpox, measles, tuberculosis and other diseases, all introduced by civilization—is ridiculous to any one who would care to compare the figures of early observers, and later of Indian Service officials themselves, even if he denied the fact that the aboriginal population of vast regions is now only a memory."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

WARD, AARON.—He is forty years of age, tall and slim, has dark hair and eyes, and is a singer. His present address will be appreciated by B. Ward, 802 Ninth Street, South, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

HAWKINS, Mrs. CLARENCE.—Her maiden name was Dorothy Nora Alexander. Her stepsister would like to hear from her. Maggie E. Goad, Box 413, Gonzales, Texas.

HURST, GERALDINE.—Mother and sister are heart-broken, and are anxious for your return. Please write at once. Marion.

HENDERSON, A. F.—Please communicate with Nellie Hartman, care of this magazine.

MYERS, LESLIE H.—He is twenty-seven years of age; has a fair complexion, brown hair, one gold tooth, and was last heard of in Dallas, Texas, in August, 1923, where he was working in the oil fields. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will kindly notify Mrs. W. F. Myers, Box 64, Altus, Arkansas.

STEWARTS, T. T.—He was in Columbus, Ohio, in 1920. Please send all helpful information to R. C. B., care of this magazine.

WHITE, HARRY.—Please get in touch with an old friend, who is very eager to see you. C. E. W., care of this magazine.

FINCH, JACK W.—I need you and am most anxious to hear from you. Please write to me as soon as you see this. Harriet, care of this magazine.

LUNNIN, JAMES FRANK.—He left Lynn, Massachusetts, and was last heard of in Wyoming, where he married Sadie Reed. He had a daughter named Myrtle. His brother is very eager to get in touch with him, and will appreciate his present whereabouts. William Lunnin, 7 Day Street, Haverhill, Massachusetts.

DALE or O'DALE, JAMES.—He was in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1922. He is a telegrapher, and is usually working for some railroad company. Please write to Kelly Vance, care of St. L. B. & M. Railway, Brownsville, Texas.

VINEYARD, WILLIAM.—He formerly came from Missouri, but later he went to Idaho. Please send all helpful information to Mrs. E. McClure, 1942 Benton Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

STANTON, LESLIE.—Eight years ago on account of the death of his father and the illness of his mother he was placed in a home in Illinois, together with his brother, William, and his two sisters, Pansy and Pearl. Later Leslie ran away, leaving no traces behind him. Any one knowing his whereabouts will kindly inform his sister, Pearl Stanton, 546 Surf Street, Chicago, Illinois, or telephone Lake View 1444.

FARRELL, JOHN MERTON.—I am worried and anxious for you. I love you and everything is forgiven. You need not come home until you are ready to do so, but please let me hear from you. Mother.

ELWOOD, WILLIAM.—Please return home or write to me. I am living with mother. Bertha, 120 West Jackson Street, Sullivan, Indiana.

NEWMAN, JOHN M.—Please return home or get in touch with me at once. Everything can be straightened out and there will be no more cause for worry. I have been in Canton, Ohio, until November 1st, but now you can reach me through your mother. Your wife, Helen Willette.

POSEY, BAILEY.—He is six feet in height, has light hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. He left home in April, 1924, and was supposed to have gone to Helena and Butte, Montana. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Inez Posey, 768 Bowery Street, Akron, Ohio.

J. C.—You may learn of something to your advantage by writing to Mrs. Mamie Hallam, 1824 Truxton Avenue, Bakersfield, California. Be sure to explain the facts to her. A. L.

STEUDEL, BEN or JACK.—He was in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1920. Please write to your brother, as he has very important news for you. G. E. S., care of this magazine.

QUINN, LAWRENCE.—He is slender, of medium height, thirty years of age, has blue eyes, dark-brown hair, and was last seen in Chicago, Illinois, about two years ago. Please write to your mother, as she has good news from California. Mrs. Catherine Quinn, 6542 Ross Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

SLOANE, JAMES BERESFORD.—He formerly came from Toronto, Canada, but is now supposed to be in New York. Any one knowing his whereabouts will kindly notify E. S., care of this magazine.

ATTENTION.—I would like to get in touch with the following boys who served with me in the U. S. Marine Corps, in Washington, District of Columbia. Whitey Paschall and Harvey Wilson, from Detroit, Michigan; "Hard-luck Charlie" Lauer, from Long Island, New York, and "Chink" Tang, Bill Williamson, Walter H. Smith, Mayeux, Bland, W. F. Brown. Please send all information to Tom Mix, care of this magazine.

BYRD, CHARLES.—Any one knowing his present whereabouts will kindly notify his mother, who is anxious for him. Mrs. Katherine Byrd, R. R. 2, Galva, Illinois.

PETTINGILL, FRED.—He formerly lived in Ellsworth, Maine, but was last heard of in Massachusetts, about twenty-five years ago. His wife and children are dead, and his sister is very anxious to get in touch with him. Mrs. Raymond Westcott, 46 Whittier Street, Portland, Oregon.

CRAFTON, U. L.—He is forty-nine years of age, small in stature, and was living in Union City, Tennessee, in 1912. Please write to your nephew, S. M. T., care of this magazine.

McDERMOTT, MATT.—He left Ireland about 1902 for New York, and later was supposed to be in St. Paul, Minnesota. M. G. Marron would like to get in touch with him, as she has news from his sister. Write to Mrs. J. McDermott, 5871 McMillan Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, or phone Lafayette 4903 J.

ATTENTION.—Will the party who adopted the children by the name of Ollie Vera, Viola and Louise Haskins, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, kindly write to Mrs. Amel Richter, Box 81, Ringling, Oklahoma.

GRANT, CHARLES JAMES.—He was born in Baker, Oregon, on June 7, 1863, and disappeared in the spring of 1912, in a wagon team, carrying a dog and two chests of carpenter tools. He is five feet five inches in height, has black hair, a sandy mustache, a scar on the right temple, and gray eyes. Please send all information to Mrs. Donald McPherson, 2548 Eighth Street, Baker, Oregon.

TRUSCOTT, RICHARD.—I would like to get in touch with the relatives of Richard Truscott, who left England and came to California in 1847, and died in Baker, Oregon, in 1900, leaving a widow and ten children. Kindly notify Mrs. Donald McPherson, 2548 Eighth Street, Baker, Oregon.

ANDERSON, WILLIAM P.—He was living in Haskell, Texas, in 1917. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will kindly write to L. A. G., care of this magazine.

FEIGHNER, EDDIE.—I have some important news for you. Please return home or write at once. Katherine Sheibach, R. R. 4, Niles, Michigan.

Mrs. PLOCK.—She is seventy-five years of age. She and her husband were living in Indiana, but they were planning to go out West. Her present address is requested by G. S., care of this magazine.

ROBERTS, Mrs. GAY.—She is sometimes known as Mrs. George Gay. It will be to your advantage to communicate with me as soon as possible. E. T. S., care of this magazine.

CHRISTMAN, ANNA MAY.—She is twenty-nine years of age, five feet six inches in height, has sandy-colored hair, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. She visited her mother in Granola, Oklahoma, but later returned to Fort Worth, Texas. She had two little girls—one, about two years of age, the other five months old. Her brother is very anxious to get in touch with her, and will appreciate any information concerning her. John Marmaduke, Star Route, Versailles, Missouri.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MILLARD, JOHN ANDREW.—He formerly came from Oklahoma, but was last heard of in Bakersfield, California. Any one knowing his present whereabouts and that of his brother, Charles, and sister, Mrs. Lizzie Millard, will kindly notify M. Kenyon Millard, 2504 Hayne Avenue, Aiken, South Carolina.

KITCHENS.—He was in Ashburn, Georgia, in December, 1922, and left a wife and three small children. He is twenty-seven years of age, five feet nine inches in height, has brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. Any information will be appreciated by his wife. Mrs. R. Kitchens, Box 564, Winterhaven, Florida.

CRAVER, JOHN.—He was in Stockton, California, some time ago, but has not been seen since. Any news concerning him will be extremely welcome. Daniel Craver, Box 86, Vandalia, Ohio.

MAYETTE, ALFRED.—He left his home in Plattsburg, New York, a year ago. He is seventeen years old, of medium height, has brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. His parents are worried, and will appreciate his present address. Mrs. David Mayette, 74 Montcalm Avenue, Plattsburg, New York.

BRADLEY, Mrs. J. FRANK.—Her maiden name was Alice Hahn. She was last heard of in Pine Castle, Florida, in 1923, where she was living with her husband and three children—two boys and one girl. Her husband has an arm missing, and is connected with a road-construction company. Any information will be extremely welcome. Marie Brygiere, "The Oak Crest," Skillman, New Jersey.

EGAN, CLIFFORD THOMAS.—He was adopted by a party named Louis Halwig, of Utica, New York, twenty years ago. It is possible that he is going under the name of Halwig. Please send all helpful news to Rose K. Simmons, 1254 Jane Street, Los Angeles, California.

B. J. T.—H. W. looks at your picture every day and is anxious for your return. We will forsake everything and come to you. I am sending a letter to Akron, Ohio, General Delivery. Please write at once. N. T.

HATTIE.—Please let me know how the plan turned out. I am very anxious to get in touch with you, as I am sure I can help you. George.

RATTIGARS.—I would like to communicate with any person who could give me any information about a family by the name of Rattigars, consisting of the father and seven sons. They came to the United States from Ireland some time before the Civil War, and some of them were in the gold fields of California. I am the son of John, the youngest brother, who remained in Ireland. Michael Rattigars, Box 117, Waterbury, Connecticut.

MILES, WALTER.—He left his home in September, 1919, and has not been heard of since. His wife is very anxious to find him, and will be very grateful for any helpful information. Mrs. Nellie Miles, 4224 Willow Street, Dallas, Texas.

CAMPBELL, JOHN IVAN.—In 1912 he was working in the telephone office at Chickasha, Oklahoma. He is six feet three inches in height, thirty-five years of age, has brown eyes, and a light complexion. His mother is heartbroken, and would like to hear from him. Mrs. Carrie Campbell Hajorth, Ottawa, Kansas.

HENDERLITU, ESTHER.—She was taken away when she was ten years of age, and she is now twenty years old. Her mother is ill and would like to communicate with her. Send all information to Mrs. H. P. Jones, 15 Ferguson Avenue, Wood River, Illinois.

WOOD, THOMAS N.—He was in Missoula, Montana, sixteen years ago, and later he went to Cottonwood, California. He is a locomotive engineer, five feet eight inches in height. Please send his present address to Charles W. Wood, 1045 Ohio Avenue, East Liverpool, Ohio.

JOHN, G. J.—If you only realized that it takes eight weeks to get a notice published in this magazine, you might take more pains in getting in touch with me. Please write to me at the same address. Mother.

GOLDIE, NOAH STONE.—He was in Kansas City, Missouri, some time ago. His sister is very anxious to find him, and will welcome any helpful information. Goldie Miller, Prestonville, Kentucky.

EBBENNIS, Mrs. MARY.—Her maiden name was Mary Lewis. Her daughter would like to get in touch with her. Mrs. Agnes Edna Judkins, Rangeley, Maine.

ARMAGOST, FRANK SHANKEL.—He is sixty years of age, and was supposed to have worked as a telegraph operator during the World War. He lived in Willard, New Mexico, some time ago, but has not been heard of since. His niece is anxious to hear from him. Mrs. Jessie Gladys Wolford, Early, Iowa.

RUSSELL, Mrs. MARY.—She was last heard of in Clarksville, Arkansas. A friend is eager to get in touch with her, and will welcome any helpful news. Elmer Lee Wilson, Chandler, Arizona.

WEST, BONNY L.—He wrote before the war that he was living in Indianapolis, Indiana. His sister is worried, and would like news concerning him. Mary E. Paris, 113 East Sixth Street, Newkirk, Oklahoma.

PETER.—Please write to me, as I have an important message for you. Kathleen.

CLARK, ROY.—He was in Tucson, Arizona, some time ago. Please send your permanent address to your mother, who has important news for you. Mother, 307 Cumberland Avenue, Howell, Indiana.

MILLER, HARRY D.—He is thirty-four years of age, heavy in build, and has black hair, which is turning gray. His wife died on November 19, 1923, and his three children need him. Please write as soon as possible. E. I. Mayes, Box 531, Columbia, Louisiana.

ROTH.—I would like to get in touch with John Roth and his son, and Annie Roth, who lived in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1892. Olive Hunton, 17 Maplewood Avenue, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

BURNETT or BONNETT, J. A.—He is six feet in height, has brown hair and eyes, a ruddy complexion, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. He was born and raised in Fort Collins, Colorado, and is an ex-soldier of Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland. In June, 1918, he enlisted in the U. S. army, and was at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky, until discharged in December, 1918, and then in October, 1918, he re-enlisted at Fort Logan, Colorado, with the army of occupation in Germany. From January, 1920, to December, 1922, he re-enlisted at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and later was in the service of the Chemical Warfare at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland. In 1924 he returned to Pennsylvania, but soon left, and has not been seen since. At that time he was wearing a dark-brown broadcloth suit, a light-brown hat, a flannel army shirt, black tie and shoes. Any information will be appreciated by his wife, Marie, care of this magazine.

POWELL, FRANK.—Please write to your sister, who is anxious to hear from you. Mrs. Tessie Reeves, 275 Grand Avenue, Englewood, New Jersey.

BURNETT or BONNETT, J. A.—Please let me know why you left home. I have worried over your long silence, and hope that you will return to your heartbroken wife. I got the car on Friday, the 17th, as soon as your envelope arrived, and wrote to the address in Pittsburgh, but the letter was returned. I have forgiven you, and will always love you. Please write to me at home or in care of this magazine. Marie.

ATTENTION.—I would like to get in touch with my parents and relatives. Eliza Adams was my mother's maiden name and my father's was Robert William Freeman. I had two sisters, Bessie and Blanche, and a brother, Elias Edward. Please send all information to Myrtle Boylan, Medford, Oregon.

PITTS, MAMIE DOVE.—I would like to find my sister, who was placed in an orphans' home in Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1912. Any news will be appreciated by her brother, Virgil L. Pitts, 1800 South Twelfth Street, Kansas City, Kansas.

JACK.—Aren't you ever coming back to keep the promise you made the night you went away? Thorol and I need you. I will not get a divorce, as I know that no one can take your place. Mrs. Jack Darling.

RHAIMES, ALBERT M.—He was last seen at Union Station, Chicago, Illinois, on November 23, 1923. Your old buddy would like to hear from you. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will kindly notify William E. Moore, Box 101, South Greenwood, South Carolina.

DONOVAN, HUBBERT.—He was last heard of at Conroe, Texas. His brother is very anxious to hear from him, and will appreciate any news. A. F. Donovan, General Delivery, Glendale, California.

FAIRN.—We are very much worried. Nothing you have done makes any difference. Please write to Helene at once. Mrs. S. R. Thompson, 3124 South Regal Street, R. R. 3, Spokane, Washington.

RAPLEY, LAURA, of Detroit, Michigan.—She was at the Nazareth Convent in Rochester, New York. Please communicate with your old friend, Nellie Wilson Magee, 160 South Rio, Los Angeles, California.

LEWIS, Mrs. BERTHA.—She was in Butte, Montana, some time ago. A dear friend would like to hear from her, and will welcome any helpful information. Henry S. Norcutt, care of C. W. Woodworth, Sebastopol, California.

CROWELL, HERBERT.—He left his home seven years ago, and is supposed to be living in Toledo, Ohio. He is twenty-six years of age, five feet seven inches in height, has dark hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and forty-nine pounds. Any news will be appreciated by his brother. Olin Crowell, Box 34, Raulo Station, Gastonia, North Carolina.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOBBY.—I am the friend that I always was and will remember only the pleasant things in our relations. Please write as soon as possible, as we are all so anxious about you. M. A. E.

MIRIAM.—We are hoping for your return. Please come home, and we will do all we can to help you, as we are all so anxious about you. Mother, Father, and Nannie.

WALLACE, DONALD.—Please let me know where you are, and come home if possible, as I need you. Frankie.

BETTERS, BETTY.—She lived at 148 Courtland Street, Syracuse, New York, and later went to Rochester, New York. Any one knowing her present address kindly notify Howard F. Knopp, 1122 Admiral Place, Elmira, New York.

OLDRIDGE, HAROLD.—I talked with Mr. Twichell, and he wants you to return to school. If you decide to obtain an education instead of being a laborer, then you are welcome home, but please consider the problem well before you return home. I am so sorry that you love me so little, and that you could leave me as you did. Please let me hear from you. Mother.

EDDIE, L. F.—Please send us your address, so we can send you money to return home. You know that you can't get well away from the family. Everything is O. K., and Helen wants you badly. Your sister, Mrs. E. W. C., Michigan.

PORTLOCK, GLEN RAYMOND.—He disappeared from Martinsville, Indiana, and was supposed to have gone to look for work. No trace of him can be found, and his folks at home are very much worried. Any information regarding him will be extremely appreciated. Mrs. S. B. Portlock, R. R. 7, Newton, Illinois.

DAWSON, JIM and CHARLEY.—Charley worked in Shreveport, Louisiana. Any one knowing their whereabouts will kindly notify their sister, Mrs. G. M., care of this magazine.

MUNNINGS, JOHN.—He attended his sister's funeral in 1916 in Warren, Pennsylvania. His aged parents would like to hear from him or from any one who knows his present address. Mrs. John Munnings, 107 Wetmore Street, Warren, Pennsylvania.

PARKER, ERNEST and FRANCES.—I met them in Boise, Idaho, in the Kozy Kitchen Cafe. Their home was once in Kansas City, Missouri, but were last heard of in 1919 in Utah. They are usually in the lunch room or delicatessen business. They have a daughter named Frances. I would appreciate their present whereabouts. Paul G. Stevens, 870½ Kelly Street, Portland, Oregon.

NORRIS, BILLIE.—He was in Omaha, Nebraska, and married a woman by the name of Anna Johnson. Please write to Sarah Norris Farnwrath, R. F. D. 6, Ottumwa, Iowa.

MERRIAM, RALPH.—His home is in Columbus, Ohio. He is six feet in height, has blond hair, blue eyes, a ruddy complexion, and was last seen in 1918, when he was supposed to have joined the navy. Any information will be appreciated by Jack, care of this magazine.

CAMPBELL, FRANCIS.—His home is in Columbus, Ohio, and he is supposed to have joined the navy in 1918. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will confer a favor by writing to Jack, care of this magazine.

WHITE, WALTER P.—He is forty years of age, five feet seven inches in height, has brown hair, blue eyes, and is a carpenter by trade. He left Los Angeles, California, about five years ago, to look for work, and has not been seen since. Please send all information to D. M. White, 778 Wofford Court, Fresno, California.

HUNTSMAN, DOCK.—He lived at Caldwell, Kansas, about thirty-five years ago. He had a friend or a cousin named Etta Bear. Any one knowing his present address will kindly notify Henry Bass, 1416 South Emporia, Wichita, Kansas.

FRED, D. M.—Do you remember an old friend in Hornney Flats? I have been trying to get in touch with you for some time. Please write to me as soon as you see this. S. M., care of this magazine.

ALEMAN, JACK, and PAMPHILY, ROBERT.—They formerly lived at 287 Clinton Street and Pacific Street, Brooklyn, New York. Please communicate with your old pal, Louis, 15 Schermorhorn Street, Brooklyn, New York.

SULLIVAN, JAMES.—He is fifty years of age, has gray hair and eyes, weighs one hundred and seventy pounds, and is a carpenter by trade. He was in Washington, District of Columbia. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will kindly notify B. F. S., care of this magazine.

HAMMAR, JEFFREY.—Your sister is heartbroken over your disappearance. Please write to her, and she promises to stand by you and keep your address a secret. His present address will be greatly appreciated by Esther Cummings, 384 Forty-fifth Avenue, East, British Columbia.

BLACKIE.—Your mother is now living in Clinton, and is very anxious to hear from you. Please write to her as soon as you can. Hilma.

PARKS, OSCAR R.—He left Shelton, Washington, in 1913, and has not been seen for some time. His mother is very ill and wants him to return home. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will confer a favor by writing to Mrs. Coral Platt, Box 569, Potlatch, Idaho.

EDWARDS, HENRY.—Please send me your address, as Aunt Gussie needs you and does not see the use of living, unless you get in touch with her at once. Please communicate with me, and I will give you the details. Anna Gerwer.

MARKOW, FRED.—He was engaged in some business in Seattle, Washington, several years ago. His brothers are very anxious to get in touch with him and will welcome any information. Arthur Markow, 359 Walker Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

O'NEILL, G. H.—All of your letters have been returned. Please write to an old friend.—W. V. Burgher, 215 O'Neill Street, West Shokan, New York.

BUDDIE.—Please write me at Spokane, Washington, as I am in great need of you. Blondie.

PARK, J. C.—He disappeared from his home on June 25, 1924, leaving a wife and four children. He is five feet eleven inches in height, forty years of age, has brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds. Please notify Mrs. J. C. Park, 2213 West Thirteenth Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

BOLINGER, CHARLES E.—He is five feet two inches in height, has light-brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and thirty-five pounds. He formerly lived in West Virginia, but later went to Mason, West Virginia. Please send all information to Fred. A. Bolinger, 205 Avery Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia.

BOLINGER, FRANK.—He is six feet in height, has light hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and eighty pounds. He was in Lakeside, Nebraska, about six years ago. Kindly notify Fred. A. Bolinger, 205 Avery Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia.

WERTBROOK, MANDAM.—He was living in Oregon forty years ago. His sister would like to hear from him, and will appreciate any helpful news. Mrs. Cornelia Johnson, 5602 Grand Avenue, West Duluth, Minnesota.

BERT.—Please write to your wife, Nellie Henry, as she is ill, and has been longing for you ever since you left her.

SHERIDAN, HUGH.—Please get in touch with your friend, who left Scotland two years ago. William MacDonald, care of William Duff, 45 Rushbrook Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

STERNBERG, A. H. A.—He left Stockholm, Sweden, in 1903, for Jamestown, New York, but was last heard of in Rockford, Illinois. His brother is anxious to learn his present whereabouts. Verner A. Swanson, 2907 West Thirty-third Avenue, Denver, Colorado.

ANDERSON, Mrs. C. S.—Her maiden name was Mary M. Lawton. Any one knowing her present whereabouts will kindly notify C. S. A., care of this magazine.

RIBBLE, THOMAS.—Please communicate with Elmo Clark, 2543 West Avenue, 35, Los Angeles, California.

HALLENBECK, EARL.—She formerly lived in Pennsylvania, and Liberty, New York. Please write to Ethel Hutton, 496 Manhattan Avenue, New York City.

WRIGHT, ROBERT.—He disappeared from Cleveland, Ohio, in 1918. He is fifty years of age, five feet ten inches in height, has blue eyes, and the initials R. W. tattooed on his hand. He is a tool maker by trade. His mother and father are dead, and his children are very eager to hear from him. Charles Sonnenberg, Jackson, Michigan.

ROBERT.—Your father and mother are heartbroken over your absence. Everything is O. K. Please write immediately. Sarah, 142 West Sixteenth Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

CHAPMAN, WILLIAM HARVEY.—He lived with his people in Kansas. Any one knowing his present address will kindly write to W. H. Chapman, Box 531, Victor, Colorado.

JENNINGS, RUSSELL J.—Before enlisting in the army he worked out in a ranch in Wyoming. After the Armistice was signed, he was seen in New York City. An old friend is very eager to find him, and will appreciate any helpful information. Gyp Maloney, care of this magazine.

BOYER, HELEN.—I am frantic over your absence. I have looked for you everywhere, but to no avail. Please return home as soon as possible. Robert C. Boyer, 626 Bloomfield Street, Hoboken, New Jersey.

VOSE, ARCHIE L.—He is forty years of age, five feet seven inches in height, has brown hair, blue eyes and was in Annapolis, Maryland, in October, 1921. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will confer a favor by notifying his niece, Hazel M. Vose, Box 8, West Wardsboro, Vermont.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Easy Way to Become a Cartoonist

By this amazing new method it is possible for *anyone* to learn Cartooning in a remarkably short time. Many of our students could hardly draw a straight line before they began to study with us. Now hundreds of them are making splendid incomes. And they learned it all *at home—in spare time!*

HE simplicity of this truly wonderful method will astonish you. Although you never leave your own fireside, you receive the personal ntion of one of America's foremost Cartoon- It is almost the same as if you were working his studio. Your mistakes are not only pointed but each correction is illustrated right before eyes. You see exactly where your faults lie. you never make the same mistakes twice. The with which you progress will amaze you. ugh this wonderful method many of our stu- are now making handsome incomes and the opportunity to enter this splendid profes- is now yours.

No Talent Is Needed

most astounding part of this wonderful od is that you don't have to know anything it drawing to begin with. The old idea that those with "inborn talent" could be success- Cartoonists is exploded. ***If you can hold a cil you can learn Cartooning this new easy way.*** rting with first principles—straight lines and ves,—you progress step by step through shad- action, composition, etc., until you find rself qualified for a splendid position as Car- ist almost before you realize it.

Work That Is Play at a Big Profit

t now there is an increasing need for Cartoonists. annot train men fast enough to meet the demand. he result is high salaries. $50 to $75 a week is t all unusual for a beginner,—many make much And there is absolutely no limit to what you do.

aside from the big pay is the wonderful fascina- of the Cartooning game. There is no "9 to 5" grind. And it really is not "work" at all, but ost delightfully interesting play. You meet in- ng people, work in pleasant surroundings and, t all, you are practically your own boss. And think of the fun of creating your own charac- being able to make quick, catchy little sketches e, at a big dinner party, at the theatre! Our ts say it is the most fascinating profession in rld.

rite For Free Booklet

To Become A Cartoonist" explains this amaz- w method in detail; shows you how it works; ou about our students and what they have ac- shed; about the tremendous opportunities in eat field and how you can qualify for one of them this very year. Get out of the low-pay rut ***now.*** Get your start in this high-paid interesting profession at once. Clip the coupon below and mail it to us ***today.***

Washington School of Cartooning

Room 121C, 1113-15th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF CARTOONING

Room 121C, 1113-15th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:

Please send me your free booklet, "How to Become a Cartoonist," and tell me about the big opportunities for me in this field.

Name.....
(State whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss)

Address.....

City.....State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

$1.00 Brings All Four Rugs on Month's FREE TRIAL

GOLD SEAL CONGOLEUM GUARANTEE SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR YOUR MONEY BACK

3 Rugs Free

4 CONGOLEUM GOLD SEAL Rugs for Less than Price of One

This Offer is for a Short Time Only

One big rug—full 9 ft. x 12 ft. size. Genuine Gold Seal Congoleum—no seconds. Three small rugs to match, identical in every way. One dollar with the coupon brings all four rugs, immediately, to anyone, anywhere. 30 days' free trial. Money back, if desired. Instead of one rug, get **four rugs** for less than the **regular** advertised **cash** price of **one.** Pay almost as you please—taking about a year's time. Ours is the only house in America that can make you such an offer.

To get the **three rugs free**—four rugs for **less** than the price of one—you must use the coupon at once. This special offer does not appear **even in our own catalog.** A dollar with the coupon is enough—**then take a year to pay.**

Don't Scrub Your Life Away

There's no meaner or harder work than scrubbing floors. Congoleum ends this sort of drudgery. This beautiful pattern will brighten any room. A damp mop keeps it clean and fresh looking.

Guaranteed Wear The Gold Seal protects you against dissatisfaction and gives you an unconditional Money Back Guarantee. You will never be allowed to be dissatisfied.

Water Proof Nothing in its material or manufacture that can rot. The surface is hard, smooth, and wear resisting. Does not stain. Not marred or hurt by spilling of hot liquids.

Lies Flat from the very first moment, without fastening. Never curls up at edges or corners. No need to tack or fasten down. Dirt cannot accumulate underneath.

No Seams Made all in one piece. No fitting or piecing together. No bother or trouble of any kind. All four rugs come in one neat package, ready to put down in a jiffy.

Less Work Dirt, ashes, grit, dust or mud cannot grind into these beautiful rugs. The lovely colorings easily kept bright, clean, and beautiful.

No Expense No laborious beating, no sending to cleaners. Absolutely sanitary. The trail of muddy boots and tracked in dirt disappears like magic with least possible effort.

REGULAR ADVERTISED PRICE OF THESE FOUR RUGS EVERYWHERE IS $19.80. SAVE $1.80—AND PAY LITTLE BY LITTLE.

Oriental Design—Taupe Ground Congoleum Pattern No. 548

It is a true Oriental design. The background is a dark taupe—the most popular color in floor coverings today. This taupe ground is brought out in a watersilk effect. The border has a blue ground. The figures of the center pattern and border harmonize perfectly. The blending of the various shades of dark brown, blue, ecru and taupe, is indescribably lovely.

$1.00 now—then $1.50 monthly.

No. H4C-548. One 9 x 12 ft. Rug with three 18 x 36 inch rugs, price for all four - - - $17.95

Our FREE Catalog of 10,000 other furniture bargains is now ready. We sell everything on credit. You're welcome to a free copy of this big book. Ask for it early. A postal card brings it to you **free.** Or simply put a cross in the square printed on the coupon below.

Pin a Dollar to Coupon Below

Spiegel, May, Stern Co., 1304 W. 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

I enclose **$1** for the **4 Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rugs**—exactly as described—pattern No. 548 on 30 days' free trial. If I return them, you are to refund my $1, also all transportation costs. Otherwise I will pay **$1.50** monthly, until special bargain price of **$17.95** is paid.

Name.....

Street or R. F. D. or Box No......

Post Office..... *State*.....

Shipping Point.....

If You Wish a Free Copy of our Big Catalog of 10,000 Other Bargains, Put a Cross (X) in This Square ☐

Spiegel, May, Stern Co.

1304 West 35th St., Chicago

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED